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**The Treatise Committee for Arturo Jude Cavazos certifies that this is the approved  
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**Important Competencies for the Selection of Effective School Leaders:  
Principals' Perceptions**

**Committee:**

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Martha N. Ovando, Supervisor

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Ruben Olivarez

---

Barbara Pazey

---

Miguel de los Santos

---

Johnny Veselka

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Principals' Perceptions**

by

**Arturo Jude Cavazos, B.S., M.Ed.**

**Treatise**

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# **Important Competencies for the Selection of Effective School Leaders: Principals' Perceptions**

Arturo Jude Cavazos, Ed.D.

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Supervisor: Martha Ovando

This study focused on competencies considered important in the selection of principals from the perspectives of effective principals on the Texas–Mexico border. The competencies of effective K-12 principals included in the study were initially advanced by Marzano et al. (2005). Specifically, an attempt was made to determine which competencies are considered important, how these were assessed during the selection of effective principals, and whether differences in importance existed by school level (elementary, middle, and high school).

Using purposeful sampling, the principals were selected from a list of high-performing schools from data provided by the Center of Research, Evaluation and Advancement of Teacher Education. A total of 100 principals participated in the study. Data were collected using an electronic survey and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Additionally, emerging data were analyzed using the narratives provided by the respondents in reference to other competencies and other ways the competencies were assessed during the selection process.

Findings indicated that whereas all the identified competencies were endorsed to be considered in the selection of an effective school leader, 2 were the most important: communication and visibility. Next highest in importance were focus; involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and culture. Additional findings indicated 8 emerging competencies, with the premier being data-driven decision making. Findings also indicated that most of the competencies were assessed by means of two types of interviews: interview with the committee or interview with the superintendent or designee. On the other hand, some of the respondents reported the competencies were not assessed, but a few were assessed using other methods, such as checking references, a Gallup survey, and experience in the district. Some were simply appointed to the position.

Findings also indicated that the endorsement of the identified competencies differed by school level to some extent. Communication was endorsed as most important by elementary and middle school principals, whereas the high school principals endorsed visibility as the most important competency to consider when hiring a principal.

Finally, implications for the selection of effective principals are offered. Moreover, suggestions for further inquiry that might illuminate other aspects of the hiring process are presented.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **General Background**

President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have issued a call to action, and the nation awaits reinforcing voices, particularly from the profession and the policy world that supports this call (Strategic Management of Human Capital, 2009). With this statement, the President of the United States has advanced the argument that the nation's public education system is ready to rise to the occasion. This call to action will further the accountability sentiment for increased student achievement in U.S. public schools. In turn, the demands on the public school principals for better student results will continue to mount. For this reason, the country's leaders at federal, state, and local levels must put themselves squarely behind policies that attract the best and the brightest to the school principal position. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute teamed up with the Broad Foundation to publish *Better Leaders for America's Schools: A Manifesto* (Finn & Broad, 2003). "This call to action envisioned a new role for the public school principal, one akin to that of a CEO [chief executive officer]" (Finn & Broad, 2003, p. 22). After all, under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), school leaders were being held even more accountable for raising the achievement of their pupils and the performance of their schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

The educational system in the United States serves as a fundamental purpose to educating children to meet the future demands and needs of society. Over the past two decades, educators have experienced changing demographics accompanied by an

increase in accountability mandates and renewed calls for school reform. Almost two thirds (64%) of all foreign-born residents arrived subsequent to 1980, most coming from non-English-speaking nations (Spring, 2004). The 2010 U.S. Census revealed that the Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, accounting for over half of the 27.3 million increase in the total population of the United States (Ennis, Rios-Vargas, & Albert, 2010). “Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent, which was four times the growth in the total population at 10 percent” (Ennis et al., 2010, p. 2). It is projected that by the Year 2050, the percent of the overall population that is Hispanic will grow from 9% to 25%, making it the largest ethnic-minority group (Ylimaki, Jacobson, & Drysdale, 2007). This shift in the makeup of the population is particularly evident in high-poverty urban schools that are increasingly serving a majority-minority student population that is among America’s poorest citizens (Frankenburg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003). In addition to changing demographics, increased accountability standards at the federal and state levels are having a major impact on the work of principals.

For instance, public education in the United States has been under increased scrutiny since the passage of NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). As a result of NCLB, schools in the United States are required to operate in a context of standardized testing accountability and public visibility. NCLB (2002) entitled calls for all public schools to test students in Grades 3–8 and Grade 10 in core content areas. With passage of this law, the federal government stepped directly into every school district that receives federal funding throughout the country. As a result,

public school principals and teachers have become the focus of student achievement, or lack thereof, across the country.

In some states, like Texas, campus accountability results are provided to the general public and parents of every student in the school for review in the form of school report cards. These are published annually to track the performance and progress of students using standardized achievement tests and compare results with similar schools around the state. Regardless of whether the information in these reports is positive or negative, the principal remains at the center of this message and must explain the results to stakeholders.

NCLB mandates that every public school demonstrate annual progress toward the goal that all students perform on standardized tests at a proficient or advanced level in the content areas by 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Principals are expected to account for raising the academic achievement of their pupils and the performance of their schools. Similar to many states, principals in Texas who do not gain satisfactory results are subject to losing their job. McGuee and Nelson (2005) found the culture of accountability has now become a culture of fear: “School leaders, whose performance was once assessed using a variety of indicators that reflected the complexity of the job, are now finding their effectiveness determined in much narrower terms” (p. 368).

Similarly, a study by Fuller and Young (as cited in *A Matter of Principal*, 2009) found that only about half of the newly hired Texas public school principals are staying on their job at least 3 years, and principals in high-poverty schools are leaving

at a more rapid rate. Furthermore, they found that these principals are not committed to staying at these schools for a long period of time, which impacts their commitment to hiring quality staff (*A Matter of Principal*, 2010). Undoubtedly, the law has added vigorous accountability standards to schools outlining serious consequences for campuses not meeting these standards. This accounts for one of the factors found to be the reason for a high turnover rate among principals at all levels (Fuller & Young, as cited in *A Matter of Principal*, 2010). The mantra “accountability for results” puts a premium on effective school leaders at all levels, particularly principals. A closer look at low-performing schools by Fuller and Young (as cited in *A Matter of Principal*, 2010) revealed that the practice of assigning less experienced principals to these schools was existent throughout the state. This, in turn, illustrates the need to focus on how principals are selected.

Undoubtedly, the role of the principal today is becoming increasingly complex. The principal is bombarded with a myriad of responsibilities, which often can be overwhelming. During the past 30 years, there has been an increasing focus on students in public schools who are not achieving academically and how effective school leaders can make a difference in improving learning. This focus has led many to research reasons for the lack of achievement and, from the theoretical basis of these reasons, design educational programs to better assist these students and their teachers. Effective education leadership makes a difference in improving learning. There is nothing new or especially controversial about that idea. What is far less clear, even after several decades of school renewal efforts, is just how leadership

matters, how important principals are in promoting the learning of all children, and what the essential competencies of successful leadership are. A quarter century of research has confirmed that one of the variables in increasing achievement is principal leadership (Adamowski, Bowles, & Cavanna, 2007). Nettles and Herrington (2007) stated, “Effective principals make the difference in improving learning” (p. 725). Others noted that the available evidence about size and nature of the effects of successful leadership on student learning demonstrates that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Some researchers also have shown that principal leadership effects, direct and indirect, account for up to one fourth of total school-level effects (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

If the principal is critical in improving student achievement, what are the competencies associated with an effective principal? The competencies, desired or observed, of aspiring principals have been the subject of reviews. Zigarelli (1996) examined the effects of six effective-school variables on student achievement with data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988. He found three characteristics that he determined were most important to effective schools: (a) establishment of an achievement-oriented culture, (b) the ability of the principal to hire and fire teachers, and (c) high teacher morale. Additionally, Cotton (1995), Teske and Schneider (1999), Rosenthal (2003), and Day (2000) reported that a



principal needs to set clear expectations for teachers and students and the school in general.

One of the most comprehensive studies that found a critical link between effective principal behaviors and student achievement was conducted by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004). In their meta-analysis of more than 5,000 research studies published from the early 1970s to 2001, Waters et al. (2004) identified 21 behaviors that they referred to as responsibilities of effective school principals; each of the responsibilities correlated to student achievement, with the average correlation of .25. These responsibilities have become more pronounced over the years since the effective-schools movement began in the early 1970s. The accountability for student performance from federal, state, and local levels has also impacted the role of the school principal.

Initially, job expectations for principals required limited responsibility for the academic programs in their schools. Their primary responsibility was to effectively manage school operations by attending to facility issues such as scheduling and building maintenance. This role was later expanded when responsibility for the academic programs was added to their list of duties (Dufour & Eaker, 1987). Today, principals are expected to perform a balancing act in order to respond effectively to the numerous demands of the job. National and state accountability systems strive to standardize the work of the principals. Locally, school districts develop evaluation instruments in an effort to add conformity to the skills of principals. The effort to standardize outputs is reflected in mandated testing programs that set specific output

benchmarks to determine whether schools achieve a desired rating or meet annual progress requirements (NCLB, 2002). Although it has been established that a key element of an effective school is an effective principal, Cotton (2003) proposed that more important is the love for learning and students, which is at the heart of every successful principal.

This chapter provides an overall foundation associated with the competencies that should be considered when selecting an effective school principal who must play a critical leadership role in enhancing student achievement. It includes a general rationale for the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a brief overview of the methodology. These are followed by definition of terms, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study, assumptions, significance of the study, and an introduction to Chapter 2.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The public demand for increases in accountability at the federal and state levels, changes in assessment, monitoring of data, and competition from charter and private schools have forced school leaders to redefine their roles to respond to new expectations. “Principals have always been a critical component of effective schools and are now a critical component in meeting the NCLB standards” (Rammer, 2007, p. 14). Early research indicated that one of the most important factors in effective schools is the principal. “In schools where achievement was high and where there was a clear sense of community, we found invariably, that the principal made the difference” (Karier, 1985, p. 219). Edmonds (1982) and Lezotte (1991) reported that

effective schools have effective principals, and without them the schools will underperform. Later studies also found that a principal is an important factor in student performance. Leithwood et al. (2004) and Hallinger (2005) conducted a review of the literature on how school leadership impacts student achievement and also concluded that school principals tend to impact student learning through their influence on teachers and structures. These studies have shown that the principal is a linchpin to student achievement, which should heighten the importance of selecting the right principal for every public school.

The increased demands and roles of school leaders make the selection process of principals a critical initial step in placing principals in schools, and superintendents play a key role in such a process. The potential consequence of NCLB further accentuates the importance of superintendents to place the right principal in every school to maximize student achievement. Principals have always played an important role in education; however, the recent focus on improving academic achievement for all students has increased the urgency to select the best possible individuals for these positions. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) suggested,

At no time in recent memory has the need for effective and inspired leadership been more pressing than it is today. With increasing needs in our society and in the workplace for knowledgeable, skilled, responsible citizens, the pressure on school intensifies. The expectation that no child can be left behind in a world and in an economy that will require everyone's best is not likely to subside. (p. 123)

Previous research suggested that effective principals bring certain competencies to the position. For the purpose of this study, a competency is defined as the sum of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform the responsibilities of principal.

For instance, Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 behaviors, or responsibilities, of an effective principal. Their meta-analysis, however, considered studies primarily with principals working in schools comprised predominantly of a minority Hispanic student population and in schools other than those located on the Texas–Mexico border. In addition, the principal responsibilities highlighted in the meta-analysis were primarily identified from the perception of campus stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, students, assistant principals, counselors, and community leaders) or superintendents (Rammer, 2007) and not the principal. There is limited research that illustrates the degree to which these responsibilities of effective school principals are important in schools comprised of a majority Hispanic student population and which of the responsibilities are considered most important from a principal’s perspective. In addition, identifying whether and how these responsibilities are assessed in principal candidates is critical in the effort to improve student achievement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined which competencies are considered important for the selection of principals from the perspectives of effective principals on the Texas–Mexico border and how these competencies were assessed during the selection process. In addition, the study was designed to determine any differences related to the importance of the identified competencies of effective principal by school level: elementary, middle, and high school.

Understanding the competencies or the sum of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to an effective principal is only powerful if those are considered when

selecting a principal for a school. This is particularly true in schools contexts where the majority of the school population is Hispanic. Culture, language barriers, economics, poor achievement, and high dropout rates are variables that have an effect on students' achievement in these schools. Research has indicated that high levels of poverty can interfere with a school's ability to successfully improve student achievement (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005); therefore, selecting an effective school principal can no longer be left to chance. Student achievement is dependent upon the right choice of principal.

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed three research questions:

1. What competencies do principals perceive to be important in the selection of an effective school leader?
2. How are the competencies of effective school principals assessed during the selection process?
3. What are the differences in the importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary, middle, and high school)?

### **Brief Overview of Methodology**

The method for this research study was quantitative using a descriptive design. This type of research is considered a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are utilized to obtain information about the world (Cormack 1991). Quantitative research is considered more reliable than qualitative investigation. A quantitative approach aims to control or eliminate extraneous

variables within the internal structure of the study; the data produced can also be assessed by standardized testing (Duffy, 1987). An existing survey with Likert-type scale responses ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) developed by Rammer (2007) was used and administered to effective principals on the Texas–Mexico border, as identified by using data from the Center of Research, Evaluation and Advancement of Teacher Education (CREATE, n.d.). According to Suskie (1996), a rating survey is generally familiar to most people and permits comparisons among respondents. “A rating scale is more useful when a behavior, attitude, or other phenomenon of interest is to be evaluated on a continuum of, say, ‘inadequate’ to ‘excellent,’ ‘never’ to ‘always,’ ‘strongly disapprove’ to ‘strongly approve’” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 185). These effective principals were selected based on the math or reading scores on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) of their respective campus for the 2009–2010 school year.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study the following definitions will apply.

*Accountability* is responsibility, including consequences, for academic student achievement in a public school system.

*Achievement* refers to student performance on the state standards test (TAKS) and meeting the proficiency goals, which is considered achieving the standards.

*Competencies* are the sum of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform the responsibilities of school principal.

*Principal selection* refers to the methods and criteria applied to choosing one individual from those candidates considered for a public school principal.

*School leader* is a person who is assigned the principalship of a public school and who is responsible for guiding, directing, or influencing campus stakeholders.

*Selection criteria* are the standards, requirements, and competencies identified in evaluating the qualifications and characteristics of principal candidates.

*Superintendent* is the chief executive officer of the public school system.

### **Delimitations**

Three areas served as boundaries to this study. Given its main focus, this study was conducted within a specific time frame, in a specific location, and with a purposefully selected group of participants. The collection of the data only occurred during the 2011–2012 school year. The data came from a maximum of 360 public school principals from the Texas–Mexico border, which made up the original cluster sample. The last two delimitations centered on the participants for the study and the demographic consideration for the campuses in the study. Only those principals who were at their respective campus during the 2009–2010 school year, when their campus was considered high performing, were surveyed. For the purpose of this study, these principals were considered effective school leaders. The final delimitation is that only principals from campuses with a majority student population of Hispanics on the Texas–Mexico border were allowed to participate in the study.

## **Limitations**

Four limitations of the study have been identified that might determine the extent to which the findings can be generalized:

1. First, the use of a survey treats participants as only a source of data, and this detached approach of collecting data by a researcher treats the participants as though they are objects (Cormack 1991).
2. The sample included only principals who responded to the survey information.
3. Principals used self- reported perceptions when completing the survey instruments. The extent of clarity of the survey items also depended upon the principal's perception.
4. The final limitation to the study is the participant pool, which impacted the data considered for analysis. Consequently, the study was limited to voluntary participants.

## **Assumptions**

This study was based on four assumptions:

1. Each principal has an accurate perception of his or her own effectiveness at his or her campus.
2. The principal has a clear understanding of the principal selection process in his or her district.
3. The principal would provide honest responses in the survey.



4. The existing survey instrument by Rammer (2007) was assumed to be valid to identify principals' perceptions of important competencies for the selection of school leaders.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study are instructive in providing those responsible for the selection of school principals, including superintendents, data on the important competencies to select principals, as perceived by effective school principals serving in schools with a student population that is predominantly Hispanic. The study describes how effective principals on the Texas–Mexico border perceived how these competencies were assessed when they were selected. Additionally, the study provides practicing superintendents and human resource managers with information that can be used to align the process for selecting principals to what effective principals perceive to be the important competencies of an effective school leader. This study may provide insight about specific competencies of principals who will perform in different school levels (elementary, middle, and high school). In addition, the study may provide awareness for principal preparation programs as well as aspiring principals. If principal leadership is a variable in improved student achievement, it is important to select principals who possess the necessary competencies.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 presented an overview indicating that principals play a critical role in the success of schools. Literature has supported the idea that effective schools

have effective principals. Additional parts of this chapter included the purpose and significance of the study, the research questions that guided the study, the delimitations and limitations, assumptions associated with the study, and a brief overview of the methodology. Chapter 2 provides an examination of the literature with respect to the competencies of effective principals. The chapter also includes a historical perspective of the principalship, theories and theorists in leadership, descriptors associated with an effective school principal, and selection of school leaders.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Summary of the Problem and Purpose**

Changes in school leadership are inevitable as schools adjust to meet the demands of society, politics, and expectations for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In turn, these demands create additional challenges for principals. NCLB (2002) set in motion the use of standardized testing to monitor the achievement of all U.S. children. This national law requires all students to perform at proficient or advanced levels by the Year 2014. This law serves to reinforce that becoming an effective principal, while being held accountable for student achievement, is now a reality for all school principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Additionally, the demographic changes in the student population of U.S. public schools, the budget crisis, and the increased rigor to the accountability system in Texas only compound the complexity of the role of the school principal today. Such complexity calls for superintendents to select school leaders who possess the competencies to be an effective principal. This study was designed to determine, from principals' perspectives, the importance of competencies when selecting school leaders.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review providing an overview of areas related to the principal. The chapter includes four distinct sections: (a) a historical development of the American public school system with emphasis on the role of the principal; (b) theories and theorists focusing on leadership and how it influences the role of the principal; (c) the role of the principal, with an emphasis on competencies of an effective principal; and (d) the selection of principals, with emphasis on

practices that hinder the process and emerging practices for school improvement.

The chapter concludes with a summary and introduction to Chapter 3, Methodology.

### **The Principalship in Historical Perspective**

A growing body of literature suggests a discernable relationship between the school leader's actions and student achievement. Although the effect is thought to be indirect and relatively small, studies have found that leadership can explain 25% of the variability in student achievement attributed to school-level factors (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The interest in school leadership has grown over time, particularly the role of the principal position. The principal's job is more difficult, time consuming, complex, and pivotal today than ever before. Current studies on the principalship often contrast the work of school principals today to that of school principals in the past and claim that the principalship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is, or needs to be, radically different from what it once was (Kafka, 2009). A report produced by the Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) portrayed the principalship of the past as follows:

Being an effective building manager used to be good enough. For the past century, principals mostly were expected to comply with district-level edicts, address personnel issues, order supplies, balance program budgets, keep hallways and playgrounds safe, put out fires that threatened tranquil public relations, and make sure that busing and meal services were operating smoothly. And principals still need to do all those things. But now they must do more. (p. 2)

This section offers a review of the historiography of the American school principal. The history of the school principal is viewed in four parts: (a) 1800s, (b) early 1900s, (c) late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and (d) 21<sup>st</sup> century. This historical account is not intended to be all inclusive but rather to highlight the changes in the principal's role

throughout the years and recognize that the responsibilities of the principal have indeed evolved over time. It illustrates that the principal has always been expected to wear many hats and fill many more roles than those noted by the Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) above.

**The principalship: 1800s.** Most schools prior to the 1800s did not employ full-time principals. At first, teachers performed all the teaching, clerical, and maintenance duties. Some schools in small towns did have a *master* appointed who handled administrative and maintenance tasks and also taught classes. These masters were accountable to the local community for what went on in the school. The master of the school was paid more than other teachers and was often a political appointee of school boards to assure the desires of the school board were performed (Cuban, 1988). These positions were filled primarily with White, male teachers desiring higher salaries and aspiring to become a principal and, later, a superintendent (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

As schools became larger in the early 1800s, and grade-level classes were established, the position of *principal-teacher* was created. This person was expected to manage the day-to-day operations of the school, which included assigning classes, administering discipline, and recording attendance, coupled with teaching classes. This position gave the principal-teacher a degree of authority. He or she was the conduit between the school and the superintendent. As the century progressed, the principal-teacher was no longer expected to teach classes and became primarily a

manager, administrator, supervisor, instructional leader, and increasingly a politician (Cuban, 1988; Rousmaniere, 2007).

**The principalship: Early 1900s.** In the early 1900s, school districts began expanding and public education saw an increase in student population. This growth resulted in the expansion of the role of the principal from that of a principal-teacher or master to one with no teaching duties and primarily a manager, administrator, and supervisor. A study of district records and school reports from 12 major cities from the 1900s through the 1930s and published in Pierce's 1935 monograph on the history of the principalship demonstrated both the mundane and complex nature of early principals' work. As Pierce noted, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the principal in most large cities was recognized as a powerful and important head of the school:

He gave orders and enforced them. He directed, advised, and instructed teachers. He classified pupils, disciplined them, and enforced safeguards designed to protect their health and morals. He supervised and rated janitors. He requisitioned all educational, and frequently all maintenance supplies. Parents sought his advice and respected his regulations. Even supervisors, general and special, as they visited his schools usually made requests of teachers only with the consent, or through the medium, of the principal. (p. 39)

Principals in these large school districts became very important as a result of their expanded role in schools. For instance, in 1884 the Chicago district superintendent declared the principal "the prime factor in the success of an individual school ... and no amount of itinerant supervision can supply his place" (Pierce, 1935, p. 36). This was a shift in the role of the principal that resulted in increased power over their schools.

In contrast to larger districts during this time, the role of the principal in smaller districts remained essentially the same as in the late 1800s. According to Ayer's (as cited in Kafka, 2009) study of principals in the early 1920s, the only influence on instruction a principal possessed was the class he taught. Most of the job entailed clerical or janitorial duties, with considerable time being spent on community contact. The principals spent their time going to the post office daily, inspecting toilets, typing their own work, operating the mimeograph machine, making sure teachers arrived on time for class, and overseeing general building maintenance. As enrollments increased in these districts, the tasks of the principals expanded to those similar to Pierce's (1935) findings.

By the 1920s, the principal's duties in large districts had been established and began to look similar to those of the principal of today. He had bureaucratic, managerial, instructional, and community responsibilities. He was expected to supervise teachers, monitor students, work in sync with district offices, work with parents, and engage the community. His authority had a direct result in the increased support and respect from stakeholders. Beck and Murphy (1993) asserted that in the 1920s and 1930s principals were considered spiritual and scientific leaders, as both the church and scientific management played important roles in American political life as the changing expectations of schooling became broader.

**The principalship: Late 20<sup>th</sup> century.** For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the principal's role was to supervise teachers, manage the school, and be a leader in the school community (Cuban, 1988). School boards empowered the school leaders,

superintendents and principals, to determine the needs of the children in their schools. Parents were generally supportive of the decisions made by the school leaders, and there was relatively little interference from the federal or state governments. Yet by the late 1900s, changes in society, the economy, and the political climate allowed leaders from the political and business worlds to redefine the principal's role in U.S. schools and place new demands on the school principalship (Newton, 2001). Schools were increasingly replacing the church as one of America's cornerstones to socialization, while principals were working to raise their prestige and authority in schools. In the 1950s postwar era, the principal remained a manager and supervisor, but according to Beck and Murphy (1993), there was a greater expectation that faculty and students would help make decisions and govern the school. Although very limited, this was the first true sign of the onset of participatory decision making, which created a shift in the role of the principal to be more inclusive.

According to Hallinger (1992), in the late 1960s and 1970s, principals were expected to manage federally sponsored entitlement programs and curricular activities. Hallinger (1992) maintained, "As a result of increased federal intervention in local policy, principals came to be seen as potential change agents" (p. 2). This focus on the principal's role to enact change was affirmed in the 1980s with Edmonds's (1982) effective-schools research, which emphasized that strong administrative leadership was a common characteristic of successful schools. In the 1980s, principals began to emerge as instructional leaders but often found themselves overwhelmed by managerial tasks. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) found that the



principal, as a relatively passive manager, had given way to a more accurate view of the educational administrator as an active leader involved in instructional matters, personnel issues, and management considerations. At the onset of the 1990s, a new demand for accountability for student learning in public schools was the culture in U.S. society (Simon, 2003). Public schools, including principals, experienced increased scrutiny by many stakeholders. Practicing school principals found themselves in constant interaction with supervisors, teachers, parents, and students in their schools. Principals were expected to work to balance the competing needs of each of these stakeholders by responding to problems and needs that were unpredictable. The work of Hallinger and Murphy (1987), Hallinger and Heck (1996) and others demonstrated that principals have been expected to be instructional leaders since the mid-1900s and that their roles have represented a mixture of expectations and competing demands.

**The 21<sup>st</sup>-century principal.** The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought about increased pressures on principals and all school leaders. NCLB (2002) and increased accountability standards at the state level demand that principals be held accountable for student achievement at the school and classroom levels. Goodwin, Cunningham, and Eager (2005), in a review of the history of the secondary school principal, asserted that as principals have been asked to do increasing tasks and take on more responsibilities, their role has become an “accumulation of expectations that have increased the complexity of the position until it has reached a bifurcation point where change is inevitable” (pp. 2–3). This outlook is in accordance with the history of the

principal as one who is expected to be strategic, instructional, organizational, political, and a community leader.

The stakes for principals are seemingly higher to accomplish. In the era of accountability, failure to meet requirements may cost the principal his or her job. McGuee and Nelson (2005) found the culture of accountability has now become a culture of fear: “School leaders, whose performance was once assessed using a variety of indicators that reflected the complexity of the job, are now finding their effectiveness determined in much narrower terms” (p. 368). This creates a concern for job security. Accountability standards account for one of the factors found to be the reason for a high turnover rate among principals at all levels (Fuller & Young, as cited in *A Matter of Principal*, 2010). Kelley and Peterson (2001) noted that effective principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be required to enhance their skills to work with a variety of societal and political issues in education in today’s world. Principals now face a greater responsibility for student achievement while working with diverse communities and parents.

The role of principals was further expanded when an increased focus on student achievement was added to their list of duties. Principals have been viewed as instructional leaders for a period of time. Today, principals perform a balancing act in order to respond effectively to the numerous demands of multiple constituencies. In addition, the changing world and nation exacerbate the complexity of the principal’s role. Administrators must be educated to operate within and for culturally and linguistically diverse populations as well (Cantano & Stronge, 2007).

The characterization of the principalship over time highlights the fact that being an effective building manager has never been good enough for principals in the past or even the present. The expectations and the role of the principal over time have changed, as has been highlighted by the historical account found in the literature. Yet, the history of the school principalship makes clear that what appears to be the biggest change for school principals today is the political environment that surrounds their work. That is, as government officials, policy makers, and district leaders increasingly seek to hold schools individually accountable for student achievement, they inevitably focus on the individual leaders of those schools—the principal—as agents of success or sources of failure (Kafka, 2009).

The evolution of the role of the principal and school leadership has lead to the development of leadership theories that provide insight and guidance to the work of the school principals. A brief review of some of the more prominent theories and theorists on leadership is presented to extend the review of the principal's role.

### **Theories and Theorists on Leadership**

As the role of the principal evolved over time, so did the theories on leadership. This review of leadership theory reveals some important new directions for the future practice of principals. The period of time, the events, and the situations surrounding the principals' responsibilities and what they were expected to do was impacted by the type of leadership that was necessary. Educational leadership is possibly the most important single determinant of an effective learning environment. Many theories of leadership are influential in guiding school leaders.

Leadership is one of the most complex and multifaceted phenomena to which organizational research has been applied. An observation by Bennis (1959) is as true today as it was many years ago:

Always it seems, the concept of leadership eludes us or turns up in another form to taunt us again with its slipperiness and complexity. So we have invented an endless proliferation of terms to deal with it ... and still the concept is not sufficiently defined. (p. 259)

The fundamental questions in human affairs are, “Who shall rule?” and “How will they rule?” These questions must be answered during national elections; when chief executive officers are replaced; when university presidents retire; when superintendents are hired; and, for the purpose of this review, when principals are hired to lead a school campus. In terms of the extensive research devoted to the subject, leadership appears to be one of the most important issues over time (Bass, 1990). “Volumes appear on the topic every year, and a recent review lists over 7,000 books, articles, or presentations on leadership” (Hogan, Curphy, & Horgan, 1990, p. 1). Campbell (1977) and Mintzberg (1982) recommended that researchers pay more attention to how individuals lead. What we know seems to have little impact on the people who actually make decisions about leadership.

So what is leadership? In the pertinent literature, a variety of leadership definitions can be found, which often leads to controversial debates (Yukl, 2006). Leadership is classified in two components. On the one hand, there is talk about the interactional, direct leadership that describes the “leadership by people”; on the other hand, there is talk about the structural, indirect leadership (management) that focuses on the frameworks of an organization (Yukl, 2006). Without direct leadership,

indirect, structural leadership cannot be realized. In a school system, the principal is expected to be the direct leader who insures the structures are in place for maximum student achievement. The interdependency between leadership and organizational cultures, structures, and processes is a must.

James Burns is generally considered the founder of modern leadership theory, according to Marzano et al. (2005). Marzano et al. wrote, “Working primarily in the area of politics, Burns (1978) first drafted a robust and compelling definition of leadership in general” (p. 13).

I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivation—the wants and the needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. And the genius leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations. (Burns, 1978, p. 19)

Marzano et al. noted that the two theories “that are bandied about in discussions of leadership in business and education” (p. 13) are transactional leadership and, more prominently, transformational leadership.

### **Transactional Leadership in Education**

Transactional theory addresses the influence between the leaders and the subordinate. At this stage of the leadership evolution, the influence process has been elevated to acknowledge the reciprocal influence of the subordinate and the leaders and the development of their relative roles over time. In general, transactional leadership is defined as trading one thing for another, or *quid pro quo* (Jago, 1982; Marzano et al., 2005). The underlying assumptions in transactional leadership are that people are motivated by reward and punishment; social systems work best with a

clear chain of command; when people agree to do a job, a part of the deal is that they concede all authority to their manager; and the primary purpose of subordinates is to do what their manager tells them to do (Bass, 1980). This type of leadership is also part of vertical leadership theories; assuming the goal is known and clear to the employees, the leader's function for explaining the way to meet the goal is considered redundant and useless (Kazantzi, 2010)

The transactional leader works through creating organizational structures whereby it is clear what is required of the followers and the rewards that they get for following orders. Punishments are not always mentioned, but they are well understood, and formal systems of discipline are usually in place. In a school environment, the transactional principal often uses management by exception, working on the principle that if the school is operating to a defined performance, then it does not need attention. However, when the students are not performing to standard, the principal proceeds to allocate work to teachers to address the issues, and they are considered to be fully responsible for it, whether or not they have the resources or capability to carry it out. When things go wrong, the teacher is considered to be personally at fault, and is punished for his or her failure, just as he or she would be rewarded for success.

The transactional principal devotes much of his or her time telling people instead of selling the idea or engaging others in the decision-making process (Bass, 1980). The central task for the principal in this style of leadership is the control and attainment of goals. This type of school leader motivates teachers by setting goals

and promising rewards for the desired outcomes. It is up to the leader to use his or her power to reinforce subordinates for their successful completion of the tasks in attaining the goals. However, using rewards and punishment as the main approach to accomplish tasks ignores the complex emotional factors and social values associated with teachers. The principal simply relies on standard forms of inducement, reward, punishment, and sanction to control the followers, in this case teachers.

Transactional principals tend to manage by exception, which refers to the idea that they are less interested in changing, transforming the work environment or employees, but seek to keep everything constant, except where problems occur. Transactional leadership really focuses less on what is usually referred to as leadership and more on management (Bass, 2008).

The questions of what makes a principal effective and which practices are most consistent with school improvement have sparked substantial scholarly inquiry in recent decades. The Transformational Era represents the most promising phase in the evolutionary development of leadership theory. Its dramatic improvement over previous eras lies in the fact that it is based on intrinsic, as opposed to extrinsic, motivation. Transformational leaders must be proactive rather than reactive in their thinking, radical rather than conservative, more innovative and creative, and more open to new ideas (Bass, 2008). Early work by Burns (1978) and Bass (1998) found effective principals' roles were more in line with collaboration with other stakeholders, particularly the role of the principal in inspiring and motivating the staff, developing a commitment to a common vision, building the staff's capacity to

work collaboratively, and shaping the organizational structure; these roles are more aligned to the principles of transformational leadership.

### **Transformational Leadership in Education**

Marzano et al. (2005) wrote,

Transformational leadership is the favored style of leadership given that it is assumed to produce results beyond expectations (Burns, 1978; Bass 2008). According to Burns (1978), transformational leaders form “a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (p. 4). As articulated by Bass (2008), four factors characterize the behavior of transformation leaders: individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

These have been referred to as the “Four Is” in the past by Bass and Avolio (1994).

Initially developed by Leithwood (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005), the transformational model of school leadership has gained prominence in the field.

Marzano et al. (2005) wrote,

[Leithwood] notes the Four I’s of transformational leadership identified by Bass and Avolio (1994) are necessary skills for school principals if they are to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, the school leader must attend to the needs of and provide personal attention to individual members, particularly those who seem left out (individual consideration). The effective school administrator must help staff members think of old problems in new ways (intellectual stimulation). Through a powerful and dynamic presence, the effective school administrator must communicate high expectations for teachers and students alike (inspirational motivation). Finally, through personal accomplishments and demonstrated character, the effective principal must provide a model for the behavior of teachers (idealized influence). (p. 15)

The transformational model is intended to make it possible to do things that have never been done by the school undergoing change. It involves metamorphosis: changing from one form to another form entirely (Schlechty, 2009).



A transformational leader often also will exhibit characteristics of a servant leader. Marzano et al. (2005) wrote, “The term *servant leadership* first appeared in the leadership literature in the 1970s” (p. 16). Greenleaf (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005) maintained that effective leadership emerges from a desire to help others. This is in direct contrast to theories such as transactional leadership that emphasize control or overseeing subordinates in the schools (Marzano et al., 2005). For Greenleaf (1977), service to the follower is the primary responsibility of leaders and the essence of ethical leadership. A principal who serves as a servant leader must attend to the needs of followers and help them become healthier, wiser, and more willing to accept their responsibilities. Leaders need to remember that they influence many others beyond themselves; they never fall in a vacuum (Maxwell, 2007). It is only by understanding followers that the leader can determine how best to serve their needs (Yukl, 2006). Servant leaders must listen to followers, learn about their needs and aspirations, and be willing to share in their pain and frustration. The servant leader must empower followers instead of using power to dominate them. Trust is established by being completely honest and open. In a set of 21 indispensable qualities of a servant leader, Maxwell (2007) also noted the importance of listening, communication, character, relationships, and servanthood.

The transformational leader is often an instructional leader as well. Marzano et al. (2005) wrote,

Perhaps the most popular theme in educational leadership over the last two decades has been instructional leadership. In their review of contemporary literature on leadership, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) note that instructional leadership is one of the most frequently mentioned educational

leadership concepts in North America. Yet, despite its popularity, the concept is not well defined. (p. 18).

However, several attempts to clarify the concept have been advanced. Early research by Smith and Andrews (1989) identified four roles of the instructional leader: (a) resource provider, (b) instructional resource, (c) communicator, and (d) visible presence. Blasé and Blasé (1999) presented a slightly different list of characteristics: encouraging and facilitating the study of teaching and learning, facilitating collaborative efforts among teachers, establishing coaching relationships among teachers, using instructional research to make decisions, and using the principles of adult learning when dealing with teachers. Blasé and Blasé (1999) also identified the following: direct assistance to teachers in their day-to-day activities, development of collaborative groups among staff, design and procurement of effective staff development activities, curriculum development, and use of action research. The instructional leader develops a meaningful working relationship by promoting a community with teachers and students in order to impact the teaching and learning process. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) asserted that in a true school community, relationships are based on shared values rather than bureaucratic roles, resulting in individuals who care, understand, and respect others. In 1999, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) linked instructional leadership to transformational leadership because it “aspires, more generally, to increase members’ efforts on behalf of the organization, as well as develop more skill practice” (p. 20).

Understanding the principal’s role and how it impacts student achievement requires an awareness of leadership theory, particularly transformational leadership.

However, various theorists have also greatly influenced school leadership practice in kindergarten through Grade 12 (K–12) education. Examining the work of these theorists can provide an enhanced understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century school leaders.

### **Theorists' Influences on the Principalship**

The works of several theorists have influenced school leaders focused on transforming schools in an effort to improve student achievement. The most prominent theorists include Collins, Covey, Yukl, Dufour and Eaker, and Bolman and Deal.

**James Collins.** Effective school leaders are not satisfied with the status quo. Often, they are in search of ways to improve the school organization and ultimately increase student achievement. Theorists such as Collins (2001) are sought out for answers and ideas on enhancing productivity in a school organization. Collins is best known for his statement, “Good is the enemy of great” (p. 1). He maintained that the reason we do not have great schools is that we have good schools and we have settled for that reality. While Collins’s work has been highly influential on the nature of businesses that have gone from “good to great,” it has made its mark on education as well. Among the many aspects that Collins indicated makes the difference between good companies and great companies is the presence of a Level 5 leader. Collins explained that Level 5 leaders are more interested in building a great company than they are in drawing attention to themselves. They blend personal humility with intense personal will. When things go wrong, they tend to look inward for the reasons, as opposed to ascribing blame to external factors. Words often used to

describe Level 5 leaders include *humility, will, ambition, modest, and unwavering resolve*. Collins noted,

Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious—but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves. (p. 21)

**Stephen Covey.** Marzano et al. (2005) observed,

The work of Stephen Covey, like that of Collins, has been highly influential in education. ... Best known for the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 1989) posits seven behaviors that generate positive results in a variety of situations. (pp. 20–21)

Covey (1989) noted that these behaviors are evident in highly effective people. The first three habits are to (a) be proactive, (b) begin with the end in mind, and (c) put first things first. These habits focus on moving the leader from dependence to independence. For instance, to be proactive, a leader must take responsibility for the decisions that are made and any consequences, good or bad, associated with the decisions. In addition, to begin with the end in mind requires a leader to clearly understand the goal and to make decisions that advance the mission. The second three habits are to (a) think win-win; (b) seek first to understand, then to be understood; and (c) synergize. These habits have to do with interdependence or working with others (Covey, 1989). A leader who possesses these habits values the work of others and understands the importance of collaboration. Sharpen the saw is the final habit, which relates to self-rejuvenation (Covey, 1989). A leader with this habit focuses on his or her own well-being and promotes this in others in the

organization. Collectively, these seven habits can be used to set a path of success for the effective educational leader as well.

**Gary Yukl.** An effective school leader quickly realizes the importance of working together with teachers and staff in order to accomplish the vision, mission, and goals of the school. Working as a team for a common purpose does not just happen; it takes a leader who understands the complexity of group dynamics in organizations to set the path in motion. Yukl (2006) pointed out that the multitude of different theories and lack of consistent findings make it difficult to identify the essence of effective leadership. Nonetheless, he outlined the 10 most important leadership functions for enhancing collective work in teams and organizations. These can be easily applied to the educational leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yukl stated, “The functions can be performed by any member of the organization, but they are especially relevant for designated leaders” (p. 456). The functions are as follows:

- Help interpret the meaning of events.
- Create alignment on objectives and strategies.
- Build task commitment and optimism.
- Build mutual trust and cooperation.
- Strengthen collective identity.
- Organize and coordinate activities.
- Encourage and facilitate collective learning.
- Obtain necessary resources and support.
- Develop and empower people.
- Promote social justice and morality. (Yukl, 2006, pp. 456–457)

**Dufour and Eaker.** Whereas Yukl (2006) provided a school leader with guidance on how to promote collective work between teams within the school organization, an important piece to collaboration is the conversations that take place

among the groups. A principal must ensure that the “right stuff” is being discussed. In their book *The Collaborative Administrator*, Dufour and Eaker (2008) made the case that in order for schools to improve student achievement, they must do more than call themselves professional learning communities. Leaders must be willing to embrace the vital elements of a professional learning community. To this end, team collaborative time almost exclusively focuses on four critical questions:

1. What is it we expect students to learn?
2. How will we know if our students are learning?
3. How will we respond when students don’t learn?
4. How will we respond when students have learned? (Dufour & Eaker, 2008, p. 21)

Dufour and Eaker (2008) argued, “Sustained and substantive school improvement will require leaders who are committed to empowering others, to dispersing leadership, and to creating systems and cultures that enable ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things” (p. 4). Professional learning communities can only be accomplished through shared leadership and focusing on the work. The autocratic authoritarian who has symbolized strong leadership in the past will simply not work. Building a collaborative culture stands a better chance of moving the individuals in the organization from a culture of compliance to commitment.

**Bolman and Deal.** Effective school leaders make numerous decisions daily. Decision making requires the leader to consider multiple aspects of the school organization and truly understand the landscape of the school. Engaging others in the decision-making process can provide the leader with direction, but ultimately the

decision is made by the leader. Processing the information needed to make a decision requires a different approach to decision making. Bolman and Deal (2008) focused on the concepts of mental models and the four frames that leaders must consider when making decisions in order to be effective: (a) structural, (b) human resource, (c) political, and (d) symbolic. Bolman and Deal (1991) described the necessary balance between leadership and management:

Organizations which are overmanaged but underled eventually lose any sense of spirit or purpose. Poorly managed organizations with strong charismatic leaders may soar temporarily only to crash shortly thereafter. The challenges of modern organizations require the objective perspective of the manager as well as the brilliant flashes of vision and commitment that wise leadership provides. (p. 21)

Multiframe thinking by leaders requires them to have a firm understanding of the organization's landscape.

Understanding leadership theory and how theorists can influence the work of school leaders is important in examining the role of the principal. This alone, however, does not ensure an effective school leader. Unfortunately, principal success has become synonymous to principal effectiveness and, in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. The next section of the literature review focuses on the research surrounding effective school leaders focusing primarily on the principal.

### **Effective School Leaders**

To describe an effective principal, an understanding of the expectation of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century principal must be part of the equation. The focus on student achievement has, by default, defined effectiveness. What must be further reviewed are the characteristics that describe an effective school leader. A look at the last 40 years,

back to the early 1970s, the beginning of the school effectiveness movement, is the basis of this review.

A general conclusion from the school-effectiveness literature of the 1970s was that the principal was an important part of effective schools (Brookover & Lezotte 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979). Specific competencies associated with effective school principals included the ability to monitor student progress on specific learning goals, promote high expectations of staff and students, monitor and supervise teachers, and monitor the instructional program. Since the 1970s, many researchers have attempted to describe effective schools, which include the principal as an important key player in student success.

A key component of an effective school is an effective principal (Whitaker, 2002). Although school success is influenced by many people, school principals remain one of the most important factors in such success. Early research on effective schools and instructional leadership pointed to the impact of principal leadership on student learning and success (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The impact of the effective principal on student achievement cannot be minimized. Influencing the creation and continuing development of cultures of learning and achievement for the well-being of all requires the leadership of principals who (a) are skilled at working with people in order to accomplish the goals of the school, (b) are able to create a school environment that results in everyone working at their best, and (c) make no excuses and expect the best results from teachers and students alike. In essence, effective



principals can be found to focus on three main areas of the school organization: (a) human relations, (b) school climate, and (c) teaching and learning.

**Human relations focus.** According to Beck and Murphy (1993), “Principals were assumed to be more like business executives, using good management and social science research to run schools effectively and efficiently” (p. 2). They found in their research that a profile of an effective principal can be created by considering his or her role in human relations. Effective principals recognize the unique styles and needs of teachers and help them achieve their own performance goals. They encourage and acknowledge good work by teachers (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

The principal as an instructional leader who supports teachers and focuses on the human relations has been supported by other researchers as well. Mendez-Morse (1991) concluded that principals are looked upon as leaders who will inspire teachers to adopt innovative pedagogies in the classroom. The role of the principal as an instructional leader is outlined by “focusing on instruction, building a community of learning, sharing decision-making, supporting ongoing professional development for all staff members, and creating a climate of integrity, inquiry, and continuous improvement” (Brewer & Blasé, 2001, p. 30).

Leithwood et al. (2004) and Hallinger (2005) conducted reviews of the literature on how school leadership impacts student achievement and also concluded the principal tends to impact student learning through influence on teachers and structures. Effective school researchers hold that a key element of an effective school is an effective instructional leader (Whitaker, 1997). Effective leaders offer their

teachers intellectual stimulation and individualized support as well (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). As leaders of school improvement efforts, principals must involve staff and understand the value of human resources (teachers) of a school while maintaining a belief about the significance of learning (Mendez-Morse, 1991). In order to maximize the human relations area, effective principals must be compassionate and empathetic. An investigation of teacher and principal perceptions of skills required for principal effectiveness found that human relations skills were typically chosen as the most important skill for administrators to possess (Kowalski, 1993).

**School climate focus.** Research by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) found that effective principals were focused more in framing the school's mission; coordinating and monitoring the school's instructional program; and developing a positive learning culture, also referred to as school climate. Villa (1992) also concluded that effective principals promote an instructional climate that strongly values and reinforces learning and achievement. Fairman and McLean (2003) in their work of dimensions of organizational health maintained that diagnosing the climate or health of schools in order to capitalize on existing leadership strengths and to identify improvement priorities should be the goal of every school principal.

Deal and Peterson (1999) described an effective principal as one who has the ability to understand and shape the climate of the school. They found that a school principal who creates a culture that promotes and encourages learning is absolutely essential in order to improve student achievement in schools. Korir and Karr-Kidwell (2000) also found a relationship between positive school climate and increased

student achievement. The principal's performance influences student achievement, including cognitive behavior, through the mediating influence of school climate. The visible principal has the opportunity to model his or her beliefs and to promote a positive instructional climate—major leadership behaviors of effective principals.

**Teaching and learning focus.** Successful principals manage teaching and learning through four practices: (a) staffing schools with teachers well matched to school priorities, (b) providing instructional support, (c) monitoring school activity, and (d) buffering staff from distractions to protect instructional time (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Other authors have advised principals to foster teacher leadership by modeling appropriate leadership behaviors and inviting teachers to share the responsibility for curriculum innovation (Marks & Printy, 2003).

This emphasis on the teaching and learning aspects of school leadership is characteristic of the instructional leadership literature. Early research concluded that a principal focused on curriculum and instruction is essential for effective schools (Blasé & Blasé, 1994; Heck, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). Strong instructional leaders have been described as hands-on with curriculum and instruction issues, willing to work directly with teachers, and constantly visiting classrooms for evidence of effective teaching and learning. Tirozzi (2001) described the principal as the school leader responsible for establishing a climate of excellence; developing a vision for continuous school improvement; promoting excellence in teaching; and ensuring the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment of student progress are coherent components of the plan for school improvement. The interest in instructional

leadership in the literature has been reignited by the demands of the accountability systems at the federal and state levels and recent school improvement movements, which have refocused the role of the principal in facilitating instructional quality (Hallinger, 2005).

Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of the results of 22 studies, using two approaches to compare the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student outcomes. They estimated that the average effect of instructional leadership on student outcomes is 3–4 times greater than the effect of transformational leadership. In the second analysis, the authors analyzed survey items from 12 of the studies and inductively identified five leadership dimensions: (a) establishing goals and expectations; (b) resourcing strategically; (c) planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; (d) promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and (e) ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. They found the strongest effects on student outcomes from Dimension 4, followed by Dimensions 1 and 3. Combining the findings from the two analyses, Robinson et al. concluded, “The more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of *teaching and learning*, the greater their influence on student outcomes” (p. 636).

Addressing the human relations, school climate, and the teaching and learning process in schools does not necessarily ensure a principal will be effective. Competencies including the sum of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform the responsibilities of school principal need to be examined as well. This

will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effective principal and the impact on student learning.

### **Descriptors of Effective Principals**

Competencies associated with effective school principals have been reviewed over time to determine what makes the difference in student achievement. Heck (1992) linked data from principals and teachers to school performance using ratings of principals' performance in three domains: (a) governing, (b) developing the school climate, and (c) organizing the school's instructional program. He found that some principal behaviors, such as frequent classroom visits, were more predictive of school achievement than others.

Andrews and Soder (1987) conducted a 2-year study to help improve the Seattle School District's 67 elementary and 20 secondary schools. They administered questionnaires to all district instructional staff to measure 18 strategic interactions between a principal and teachers. These 18 interactions were grouped into four descriptors: (a) resource provider, (b) instructional resources, (c) communicator, and (d) visible presence. Strong principals were viewed as possessing these characteristics. Andrews and Soder concluded, "As indicated ... the normal equivalent gain scores of students in strong-leader schools were significantly greater in both total reading and total math than those of students in schools rated as having average or weak leaders" (p. 10).

In a separate study in the same year, Dwyer, Barnett, and Lee (1987) identified nine behaviors of effective principals. The researchers spent nearly 2,000

hours in 17 schools shadowing and interviewing principals and interviewing teachers and students to determine the works of these principals. The research revealed nine routine behaviors among these effective principals: (a) goal setting and planning; (b) monitoring; (c) evaluating; (d) exchanging information; (e) scheduling, allocating, and organizing; (f) staffing; (g) modeling; (h) governing; and (i) filling in.

Klauke (1988) reported the recommended knowledge and skills that a principal should possess as those identified by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. These include the ability to analyze problems, to be decisive, to organize duties and tasks, to communicate effectively, and to tolerate stress. Dufour and Eaker (1987) added delegating as an important trait of an effective principal. Cruz (1995), on the other hand, presented a practical look at effective principals from a superintendent's perspective: "An effective principal is someone with integrity which is exemplified by their honesty, sincerity, and compassion for others" (p. 1). Cruz also reported that a principal must be an effective communicator with all stakeholders, a team builder, an advocate of students and teachers, and one who creates a safe learning environment for all.

Walker (1990) conducted a study to identify the competencies of exemplary principals. The design of the study required researchers to shadow principals of three national award-winning schools for 4 weeks. During this period, the principal's daily interaction with teachers and students as well as management of the day-to-day operations of the school were observed and documented. Analysis of the results of this 4-week period revealed 12 key knowledge and skills for effective leadership: (a)

problem analysis, (b) judgment, (c) organizational ability, (d) oral communication, (e) written communication, (f) decisiveness, (g) leadership, (h) sensitivity, (i) stress tolerance, (j) motivation, (k) range of interests, and (l) range of educational values. The findings were limited and Walker noted using caution in generalizing these skills to all leaders, considering that the study involved three principals.

Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) discussed several characteristics needed for effective task performance: expressing a positive attitude, initiating and maintaining organization, decision making, motivating the faculty and staff to work hard, and communicating. In addition, they concluded that principals should exude enthusiasm for work and accomplishment of goals in order to be a role model for the faculty and staff (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990).

Hallinger and Heck (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005) synthesized the findings from 40 empirical studies conducted between 1980 and 1995. They organized those studies into three broad categories: (a) studies that used direct-effect models, (b) studies that used mediated-effect models, and (c) studies that used reciprocal-effect models. Direct-effect models are those that found a direct link between principal behavior and student achievement. Marzano et al. (2005) explained,

This was basically the approach taken in school effectiveness studies of the 1970s—if the principal engages in certain behaviors, student achievement is enhanced; if the principal doesn't engage in these behaviors, achievement is not enhanced. (p. 24)

In their review, Hallinger and Heck (as cited in Marzano et al., 2005) concluded that, in fact, the principal was linked to improved student achievement.

Schmeider and Cairns (1996) surveyed 450 school principals in California on the top 10 critical skills necessary for principal success. The top 10 characteristics identified by these principals were the following:

- having a vision along with an understanding of the steps needed to achieve relevant goals,
- demonstrating a desire to make a significant difference in the lives of staff and students,
- knowing how to evaluate staff,
- understanding that change is ongoing and that it results in a continually changing view of the principalship,
- knowing how to facilitate/conduct group meetings,
- portraying a sense of self-confidence on the job,
- knowing how to encourage involvement by all parties in the educational community, [and]
- knowing where the ethical limits exist with the district or building and balancing that knowledge with one's own professional values. (Schmeider & Cairns, 1996, p. 3)

After carefully reviewing research on effective principals, Keller (1998) also found a focus on teaching, an ability to communicate the school's mission clearly and consistently, high standards, clear goals and monitoring progress, an atmosphere of trust, promotion of staff development, and low tolerance of poor teachers were characteristics of an effective principal. Davis (1998) found that effective principals possess qualities that include organization, decisiveness, efficiency, task orientation, and communication skills. He further concluded that effective principals can unite the stakeholders to embrace a common purpose and vision for school improvement, which results in increased student achievement.

Cawelti (1999), focusing on six schools that had high percentages of at-risk students and high levels of student achievement, determined that the best principals



are good analyzers of what their school needs and are able to motivate others into taking the actions necessary to enhance student achievement. Teske and Schneider (1999) examined leadership in high-performing schools in New York City and found one common element: strong and consistent leadership by the school principal. They concluded, from the schools they visited, that these schools were successful to a large degree because of the alert, consistent, resourceful, and sustaining energy of the principal.

In the last decade, meta-analyses have been conducted in an attempt to further understand what competencies are associated with an effective school principal that result in increased student achievement. One of the most significant meta-analyses was conducted in 2003. Cotton (2003) published the findings of her narrative review of the literature in the book *Principals and Student Achievement: What the Research Says*. She conducted a narrative review, which is a logical analysis of the research looking for patterns and trends, as opposed to a quantitative review. The focus was on studies conducted from 1985 to 2002. Cotton (2003) reviewed a total of 81 reports, some of which dealt with more than one topic. Fifty-six of the reports dealt with the influence of principal leadership on student attitudes, eight with student behaviors, 15 with teacher attitudes, four with teacher behaviors, and three with dropout rates. Cotton (2003) identified 25 categories of principal behaviors and knowledge that positively affect student behaviors, teacher behaviors, and dropout rates:

1. Safe and Orderly School Environment
2. Vision and Goals Focused on High Levels of Student Learning

3. High Expectations for Student Learning
4. Self-Confidence, Responsibility, and Perseverance
5. Visibility and Accessibility
6. Positive and Supportive School Climate
7. Emotional and Interpersonal support
8. Parent and Community Outreach and Involvement
9. Rituals, Ceremonies, and Other Symbolic Actions
10. Shared Leadership, Decision Making, and Staff Empowerment
11. Collaboration
12. Some General Findings About Instructional Leadership
13. Ongoing Pursuit of High Levels of Student Learning
14. Norm of Continuous Improvement
15. Discussion of Instructional Issues
16. Classroom Observation and Feedback to Teachers
17. Support of Teachers' Autonomy
18. Support of Risk Taking
19. Professional Development Opportunities and Resources
20. Protecting Instructional Time
21. Monitoring Student Progress, and Sharing Findings
22. Use of Student Progress Data for Program Improvement
23. Recognition of Student and Staff Achievement
24. Role Modeling
25. What Principals *Don't* Do. (pp. iii–iv)

Cotton (2003) concluded that, while not a quantitative review, principal leadership did have an effect on student outcomes, albeit an indirect one. Cotton (2003) explained by citing the work of others:

In general, these researchers find that, while a small portion of the effect may be direct—that is, principals' direct interactions with students in or out of the classroom may be motivating, inspiring, instructive, or otherwise influential—most of it is indirect, that is mediated through teachers and others. (p. 58)

In contrast, Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger (2003) conducted a synthesis study using a quantitative approach. They used a meta-analysis as their research methodology and used the correlation coefficient as the measure of the relationship between leadership and student achievement. The review examined studies from 1986–1996 across a variety of countries. Their primary finding was that overall

leadership of the principal has almost no correlation with student achievement. The correlation they found was .02, much lower than the .25 found by Marzano et al. (2005). Although a relatively small correlation was uncovered in Witziers et al.'s meta-analysis, it still presents a link. Marzano et al. wrote,

If the Witziers correlation represents the true relationship between leadership and student achievement, an increase in leadership behavior from the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile is associated with an increase in student achievement from the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile. (p. 26)

This would support Witziers et al.'s basic conclusion that "the tie between leadership and student achievement is weak" (p. 418). This in fact, is but one conclusion that can be drawn from the last 40 years of research—certainly not the only one.

Yet another synthesis study was conducted by Leithwood et al. (2004), which employed a narrative approach. In meta-analysis, they estimated that the correlation between leadership and student achievement was between .17 and .22. They concluded that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school. Leithwood et al. (2004) identified three basic practices as the "core of successful leadership" (p. 8): setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. The largest proportion of the leader's impact was in setting direction, which is aimed at helping school staff establish and understand the goals of the school and is the foundation of a shared vision for the school. Developing people involves building capacity of those within the school and capitalizing on their strengths. Redesigning the organization involves changing those organizational characteristics that might "blunt or wear down educators' good intentions and actually prevent the use of effective practices"

(Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 9). These findings were similar to those by Leithwood and Riehl (2005), who noted four skills and practices seeming to matter the most in improving student achievement through effective principals: (a) setting directions that secure the physical environment and achieve high academic standards, (b) developing people to use effective instructional strategies and interventions, (c) redesigning the organization to include teachers and parents in decision making, and (d) managing the curriculum effectively by staffing the school with teachers who align with the mission and direction and buffering them from distractions.

Marzano et al. (2005) conducted a quantitative meta-analysis with some similarities to the work by Witziers et al. (2003) and by Leithwood et al. (2004). Marzano et al.'s study involved a meta-analysis of over 5,000 studies published from early 1978 to 2001. They begin their meta-analysis by conducting searches of entries on leadership in three standard databases: ERIC, Psych Lit, and Dissertation Abstracts. They also reviewed synthesis studies such as those by Cotton (2003) and Hallinger and Heck (1996). Some of the characteristics of studies used in the meta-analysis included 2,802 schools (1,319 elementary, 613 middle or junior high schools, 371 high schools, and 499 K–12 schools), 14,000 teachers, and an estimated 1.4 million students. No studies prior to 1978 or after 2001 were located or considered.

The typical study in Marzano et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis used some type of questionnaire asking teachers about their perceptions of the principal's leadership behaviors. The average score for the teachers' responses within each school was then correlated with the average achievement for students in that school. The unit of

analysis in the study was the school; each school had a single summary score representing the average achievement of the students and one or more summary scores representing the average perception of teachers regarding general leadership behavior and one or more specific leadership behaviors of the principal (Marzano et al., 2005). Marzano et al. identified 21 behaviors that they referred to as “responsibilities” (p. 41) with an average correlation between leadership and student achievement to be .25 (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Correlation of Effective Principal With Student Achievement,  
Listed in Descending Order*

Responsibility	Correlation
Situational awareness	.33
Flexibility	.28
Discipline	.27
Outreach	.27
Monitoring/evaluating	.27
Culture	.25
Order	.25
Resources	.25
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	.25
Input	.25
Change agent	.25
Focus	.24
Contingent rewards	.24
Intellectual stimulation	.24
Communication	.23
Ideals and beliefs	.22
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	.20
Visibility	.20
Optimizer	.20
Affirmation	.19
Relationships	.18

*Note.* Source: *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results*, by R. J. Marzano, T. Waters, and B. A. McNulty, 2005, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano et al. (2005) explained that this correlation indicated that an increase in principal leadership behavior from the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile is associated with a gain in an overall achievement of the school from the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile. Waters et al. (2004) reported that if one of the principals improved his or her demonstrated abilities in all of the 21 responsibilities by one

standard deviation, it would translate into an increase of student achievement by 10 percentile points.

Marzano et al. (2005) offered a statement of their findings in light of other studies. They pointed out that the findings in their study of an average correlation of .25 between principals' leadership behavior and student achievement was much higher than that reported in a meta-analysis conducted by Witziers et al. (2003), which reported a correlation of .02, indicating almost no relationship between leadership and achievement. One major difference is that Witziers et al. focused on schools in various countries, whereas Marzano et al. concentrated entirely on studies involving schools in the United States. Marzano et al. summarized the results of the meta-analysis conducted in their study as follows:

In broad terms, our meta-analysis indicates that principals can have a profound effect on the achievement of students in their schools. We also found that the studies we included in our meta-analysis reported different size correlations between principal leadership and student achievement—some very large and positive, some low and negative. Our attempts to explain these differences using moderator variables such as study quality and level of schooling did not produce any straightforward explanations. (p. 45)

The literature supports that the principal is a linchpin to student achievement. If this is the case, then selecting a competent principal to lead the schools should be a priority for every superintendent and school board. However, the goal of selecting the best principal candidate can be compromised by the selection process itself. Superintendents, school boards, and human resource administrators must be committed to establishing selection processes that yield the best principal candidate. This cannot be left to chance. Therefore, the practices surrounding the selection of

principals will need to be examined in order to gain insight on the process and ways to improve it.

### **Selection of Principals**

Hiring quality principals to lead America's schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be a very complex and demanding process. Hiring a new principal can affect the vitality and student achievement rates of a school. When making hiring decisions, superintendents and school boards must consider the future of their district and schools. Lambert et al. (2002) noted that perceptions of teaching and learning have changed, and expectations of schools, and the principals who lead them, have changed as well. This being the case, examining the selection process is critical for ensuring an effective principal is selected for every school.

The criteria and processes to select principals are as varied as the definition of effective principals. According to a nationally representative survey, superintendents reported that hiring new school principals is highly challenging (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, & Foleno, 2001). In part, hiring an effective principal is challenging because a candidate's leadership ability is difficult to gauge. Districts employ varying methods for assessing a prospective principal's competencies, but no universal or systemic process has gained prominence. Finding a compatible match between the candidate and the school continues to be a challenge as well. Currently, there appears to be no secret formula for determining this match. However, the literature does support the importance of the school leader's ability to work with teachers and staff.



The success of new principals is contingent upon their endorsement by teachers, staff, and community members (Lambert et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004).

School districts' hiring processes present a second challenge in selecting new school principals. While school boards make the final hiring decisions, interview committees are often charged with the responsibility for making certain the right match between the principal candidate and the school exists when selecting a principal. Interviewing-committee involvement also begins the process of leadership succession, which has been found to be essential in setting the tone for a new principal's administration (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Interview committees, commonly composed of central office administrators, teachers, classified staff, parents, and community members, evaluate applicants and recommend principal candidates for hire (Muhlenbruck, 2001).

Some school district superintendents devote the time and energy necessary to clearly define and articulate what they are looking for in selecting and hiring the principal and how they will determine whether a candidate meets the selection criteria. This increases the likelihood of selecting the very best person for the principalship. Early research indicated that many school districts recruit and select principals in a haphazard fashion (Anderson, 1991). Historically, the selection of the principal often has been under the control of the "good old boy network" frequently headed by the superintendent (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983, p. 5). The critical link between the principal and student achievement demands the selection process used in identifying the best principal candidate for a school become a priority for school

districts. For this reason, a closer look at practices that hinder or support the selection process is important.

**Practices that hinder the selection process.** According to the research, some district hiring practices limit the applicant pool and hinder the committee's ability to attract the best candidates. Districts are encouraged to avoid certain practices during the recruitment process. Failing to determine and understand campus needs, casting a narrow net, and allocating inadequate time and funding for the search are among the top three (Clifford, 2010). These practices must be reviewed and analyzed carefully in order to attract the best candidate pool. Each school district must determine what the selection criteria should be for filling the vacancy of the school principal in their district. Many universities, federal and state agencies, educational organizations, and scholarly individuals have designed and created publications of criteria and standards to use in the hiring and assessing of a school principal's performance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These publications include standards by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2002) and the National Association for Secondary School Principals (2002), as well as the revamped Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards by the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008).

Districts are also encouraged to avoid practices that hinder selection committees' ability to make effective decisions. For example, the committee must be well informed of relevant campus data during the hiring process. School data and research are infrequently accessed when committees make critical decisions about

personnel and instruction (Schlueter & Walker, 2008). The committee must be expected to review the selection criteria and standards for the principal position. Frequently, national and state standards and assessments are not considered (Schlueter & Walker, 2008). The roles and responsibilities of the selection committee must be clear. Vagueness is not an option. Finally, hiring for just the principal position and not the organization is a practice that hinders the committee's ability to make effective selection decisions. Although principals are expected to lead a school, he or she might also be asked to lead district initiatives or participate in a district-level committee assigned to address a district issue or challenge.

Practices that hinder the recruitment process or the work of the selection committee continue to be a challenge for many districts. Failure to review the selection process and identify practices that might be getting in the way of selecting the best candidate begins with the expectation of the board and superintendent. Some districts have begun to revise and standardize principal selection and hiring practices to ensure that recruitment processes attract the right talent to the principalship and that selection committees make informed decisions about future principals.

**Practices that enhance the selection process.** Practices that can be employed by a district to enhance the recruitment process include preparing for succession. Engaging the current school staff in conversation about school organizational goals and plans and the leadership transition is an important part of succession. Allowing time for the recruitment process to take place is also important. Clifford (2010) suggested that large school districts should allow 1 year from the

point of a vacancy announcement to recruit, select, and transition a permanent replacement for a school principal, with smaller districts allowing less time. The risk of choosing an ineffective principal is great when hasty decisions are made. Clifford noted other practices that have been identified to enhance the recruitment process include setting priorities, updating school information, documenting each step in the process, and being strategic about recruiting. Formally advertising positions through principal certification programs, professional associations, and Internet-based employment services should be considered.

A practice that has been identified as a must in the selection process is the importance of considering standards and research (Clifford, 2010). To a certain extent, school boards, superintendents, human resource administrators, and search committees can and should set clear selection criteria, because hiring is such an important local decision. The lack of a clear understanding or agreement of what constitutes important competencies may have a detrimental effect on the selection. However, research has provided school officials and search committees with information on effective school leaders. For example, Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 responsibilities of an effective leader that correlate to student achievement (as shown in Table 1). Selection committees and superintendents should strive to achieve a collective vision of effective school principal competencies and consider such information when selecting a principal candidate.

While the literature on effective principals is extremely important, there is little evidence that a clear approach for considering this information exists in the

process for selecting principals. In fact, Clifford (2010) identified this void in the selection process as a practice that hinders the selection committee's work. In early research, Barron (1990) did a preliminary investigation of superintendents' perceptions regarding recruitment and selection of principals. He utilized a random sample of 80 names selected from a list of 1,000 randomly selected public school superintendents. From the results of his research, Barron concluded,

Superintendents indicated that professional references were the singular most important criterion upon which to select from among the principal candidates. Following closely in importance and tied for third place were possession of a standard administrative certificate, teaching experience, and compatibility of candidate's goals with those of the school system. Possession of a master's degree in administration and compatibility of the candidate's values with those of the community were some other remaining considerations but not the most important. (p. 5)

Dillon (1995) found that superintendents placed a much higher emphasis on proven candidate experience in administrative positions and little importance on the familiarity of the candidate with the employing school system. Dillon did not reveal the superintendents' reliance on what the literature identified as competencies of effective school principals. Another study by Simon (2003) investigated whether school superintendents were seeking different skills and aptitudes from building-level administrators to successfully lead schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study examined whether superintendents considered those factors when they hired principals. Superintendents in Pennsylvania were surveyed, and Simon indicated that superintendents were unaware of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards for principals and preferred the use of interviews and references as the primary methods for assessing the principal candidates. This finding exemplifies the

disregard for standards and research that Clifford (2010) identified as an important practice for selecting the best principal candidate.

Glass and Bearman (2003), when commissioned by the Education Commission of the States to investigate the selection criteria used by superintendents for choosing secondary principals, surveyed 420 superintendents. Glass and Bearman found the following:

- Effective communication skills were the most important hiring criteria identified by the superintendents.
- Understanding principles of effective instruction was second most important followed by the ability to manage student discipline.
- Next important, was the ability for a secondary principal to handle community relations and knowledge of the teacher evaluation process.
- The next tier of identified criteria included: consensus building skills, personality fit, and feedback from selection committee. (p. 3)

In a more recent study, Rammer (2007) found that although superintendents expressed some knowledge of the literature on effective school leaders, no systematic process existed for evaluating these in the selection of principals. Rammer's study consisted of surveying 370 superintendents in Wisconsin to determine how the superintendents considered the skills, traits, behaviors, and responsibilities identified in the literature for effective principals in their selection of principals. How superintendents assessed these skills, traits, behaviors, and responsibilities in the candidates they hire was also asked as part of the survey. The set of responsibilities of effective school leaders identified in the work of Marzano et al. (2005) was used as the basis of Rammer's study. Results revealed that the superintendents in Wisconsin considered the responsibilities very important. The data of Rammer's study were also

clear that superintendents in Wisconsin did not have a systematic, intentional, or methodical means to assess the responsibilities in principal candidates.

The literature related to the selection process for principals is clear about the importance of reviewing the practices of the recruitment and selection committee employed by a district. Furthermore, standards and research must be an integral part of the review and consideration of principal candidates for selection. Consideration of how to integrate the literature on effective school principals as a solid foundation of the selection process must become a priority for school boards and superintendents. Moreover, as most of the research focused on the superintendents' perspectives associated with the selection of principals, there is a need to determine the equivalent from effective principals.

### **Summary**

The review of the literature revealed that the role of the principal has evolved as political and societal pressures have become more of a significant factor in public education. Being an instructional leader and a transformational leader seems to be part of the necessary ingredients to meeting the increasing accountability demands at the federal, state, and local levels. The literature described the significant role that a principal plays in an effective school. The principal is an important link to student success, according to the literature. The debate as to the degree of the link continues as studies evolve.

The literature indicated a variety of competencies that distinguish effective principals from less effective principals. These competencies of an effective principal

vary and are numerous. For instance, Cotton (2003) identified 25 categories of principal behaviors and aptitudes that were not correlated to student achievement but indirectly, positively affected student behaviors, teacher behaviors, and dropout rates. Marzano et al. (2005) described 21 leadership practices or behaviors that were positively correlated to student achievement. They made a compelling argument for the significance of the correlation.

The literature review on the role of the principal in school effectiveness and the quantified correlation between the principal leadership and student achievement was comprehensive in nature but revealed a gap in the research. Studies reviewed revealed descriptors of an effective principal from perceptions of teachers and students (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Cawelti, 1999; Dwyer et al., 1987; Heck, 1992; Walker, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005) as well as superintendents (Dillon, 1995; Glass & Bearman, 2003; Rammer, 2007; Simon, 2003), but few researchers have focused studies from the perception of the principal. Therefore, the question of what school leader competencies are important in an effective school as perceived by the principal needs to be explored. In addition, there are limited studies on effective principals or their selection centered on schools with a Hispanic student population as a majority. This leads to the next question of whether the leadership competencies of an effective principal as found in previous research are similarly important in schools with the majority student population consisting of Hispanic students. Finally, the question as to whether these competencies of an effective school leader, as perceived by principals, are assessed when selecting the principal must be explored.



Chapter 3 presents the methodology of this study. Chapter 3 describes the design, population sample, the instrument for data collection, data analysis procedures, and quality measures.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The focus of this study was on the competencies associated with effective school principals on the Texas–Mexico border. The study examined from principals’ perspectives the importance in the selection of school leaders of the competencies identified by Marzano et al. (2005) of effective K–12 principals. This chapter covers the following topics: (a) population, (b) participants, (c) instrument, (d) procedures, (e) variables, (f) research design, (g) data analysis, and (f) limitations. In addition, this chapter includes the sampling framework as well as the procedures for selecting the participants. Information regarding the survey used for the study is included.

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What competencies do principals perceive to be important in the selection of an effective school leader?
2. How were the competencies of effective school principals assessed during the selection process?
3. What are the differences in the importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary, middle, and high school)?

#### **Methods and Rationale**

This study employed a quantitative method, through a descriptive survey, to determine the importance, from principals’ perspectives, of the competencies of effective school leaders in the selection process. The quantitative method of study utilizes statistical methods to analyze data with the goal of reporting research findings objectively. This type of survey allows for the researcher to remain objective in the

study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Participants in the study were asked to complete a survey that included a 5-point Likert scale. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) asserted that using a rating scale and allowing multiple individuals to complete the same survey independently of each other are strategies the researcher can use to maintain objectivity.

Descriptive survey research collects data to answer questions regarding the current status of the subject of study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), it also involves “information about one or more groups of people—perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experience—by asking them questions and tabulating their answers” (p. 183). This method of study allows the researcher to generate an accurate description of an educational phenomenon, as it exists (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Once the phenomenon is understood, the researcher can make recommendations for necessary change (Gall et al., 1996). The ability to draw inferences about a particular population from the responses of the sample can be accomplished by using a survey. However, this method is not immune from limitations.

For example, the use of a survey collects data during a specific moment in time. The researcher can draw conclusions from the results and predict the impact over a longer period of time. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) indicated that the extrapolation of the state affairs over a long period of time can be hazardous, but recognized that “it is our only way to generalize from what we see” (p. 184). The principals’ responses to the survey in this study reflected their perceptions at the time

of completion. The results, however, can be used to examine the selection processes used in districts. The extent to which these results are applicable will rest upon the reader and the situation in each district.

Another consideration when employing survey research is that it is dependent on self-reported data. This type of data collection presents several challenges in that participants might respond to the survey based on what they think the researcher wants to hear. Another challenge is that participants might respond in a favorable way in order to give the impression that their districts employ best practices identified by the research when selecting principals. This would impact the results of the study and potentially misrepresent the facts, thus limiting the use of the data for improving the selection process of principals.

The researcher recognized the limitations associated with the time the study was conducted and the challenges that are presented with self-report data. The researcher acknowledged these limitations when interpreting the results of the study.

## **Population**

The population for this study was school principals working along the Texas–Mexico border. The Texas Education Agency provides services to over 1,041 school districts in Texas through 20 Education Service Centers that are located throughout the state. Each center provides support and varying services to districts in the respective region or service area. In 2009, there were 7,691 school principals represented by the 20 Education Service Centers in the state (Texas Education Agency, 2011), of whom a maximum of 360 principals would be asked to participate

in this study. Of these, 59.3% were female and 40.7% male, 67.44% were White, and 20.57% were Hispanic (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

There are 37 school districts in Region 1, which is located in South Texas, and 30 school districts in Region 19, located in El Paso. Among these school districts, there are high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, and K–12 schools. In the 2009–2010 school year, there were approximately 577,000 students in the Region 1 and Region 19 areas combined and an estimated 777 school principals. Also located in the Region 1 and Region 19 service areas are The University of Texas–Pan American and The University of Texas at El Paso, respectively. The population for this study includes principals.

### **Participants**

The research study focused on effective school principals on the Texas–Mexico border. Two levels of participant selection were employed: selection of high-performing campuses and selection of principals of majority Hispanic schools. The list of identified high-performing schools for the 2009–2010 school year provided to the two universities was used to identify the effective school principals along the Texas–Mexico border. The Texas Education Agency (2011) assigns performance ratings to all public schools based on student performance on the TAKS: Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Unacceptable. Although the identified high-performing schools were expected to have attained an Exemplary rating, this might not necessarily be the case due to the number of performance indicators measured at the high school levels. Therefore, a minimum of a 75% passing rate in the reading or

math TAKS for the 2009–2010 school year also was required in order to be considered a high-performing school. The data were cross-referenced in order to avoid duplication. In other words, if the campus was identified as high performing by CREATE and met the minimum passing rate on the reading or math TAKS test, the principal would be considered only once to participate in the study.

The principals chosen to participate in the study were identified from a data set provided by CREATE. Annually, CREATE compiles and provides a report to universities across the state that includes a list of the highest performing high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools within a 75-mile radius from the university. The criteria used to identify the high-performing schools by CREATE were based on campus TAKS scores on math or reading for a given school year. Included in the distribution of this data were The University of Texas–Pan American and The University of Texas at El Paso.

In addition to the campus being identified as high performing by CREATE and the minimum passing standard being met, only principals in schools with a majority Hispanic student population during the 2009–2010 school year were considered for this study. This criterion was determined by including a question on the survey that required respondents to self-report the student demographic population of their campus and ensuring the overall student population for the 2009–2010 school year consisted of a minimum of 51% Hispanic students.

The principals of the schools identified as high performing, based on the aforementioned criteria, were identified as possible participants for the study. These

principals were invited to participate in the study only if they were the principal of the selected school during the 2009–2010 school year. A maximum of 360 principals would be asked to be part of this research study.

### **Instrument**

This research study employed an existing survey that was used in a study by Rammer (2007) in Wisconsin. Permission was requested and granted to use and to slightly modify the existing survey. This descriptive survey instrument was used to collect data from the principals. Participants were asked to respond to questions related to demographics, including gender, ethnicity or race, years of experience, and questions regarding the type of school they are leading. In addition, the participants were asked a series of questions that must be answered using a rating scale. According to Suskie (1996), most people are familiar with a rating survey, and it permits comparisons among the respondents with a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A rating scale is considered appropriate when conducting this type of study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), “A rating scale is more useful when a behavior, attitude, or other phenomenon of interest is to be evaluated on a continuum of, say, ‘inadequate’ to ‘excellent,’ ‘never’ to ‘always,’ or ‘strongly disapprove’ to ‘strongly approve’” (p. 26).

Face and content validity were established by Rammer (2007) for the survey instrument using an expert panel of three Southeast Wisconsin public school superintendents and a peer-review panel of three doctoral students. The expert panel consisted of three superintendents with a range of experience of 15–22 years. These

superintendents were given the survey instrument and were asked a set of questions to determine face and content validity. The panel members were sent the actual electronic version of the survey and cover memo as well as a paper copy of the documents for their review. They were interviewed concerning the instrument. They reported that the survey was easy to understand and complete. The instructions were direct and explicit. The peer review panel consisting of the doctoral students was given the paper version of the cover memo and the survey. They reported similar responses of the expert panel (Rammer, 2007).

Rammer (2007) also conducted a pilot study of the survey to establish instrument reliability, test the response rate of the survey, identify any problems with the electronic distribution of the e-mail instructions of the survey, identify any problems with the survey questions, and test the collection and technical manipulation of the data. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to be .891. Nunnally (1978) indicated that anything at .70 and above is acceptable.

A descriptive-survey research method was selected because it allows for a statistical analysis of the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). A Likert scale produces interval data that allow for quantitative examinations (Suskie, 1996). A descriptive survey is an efficient means of gathering data and limiting the introduction of threats to reliability that can occur using a collection means associated with qualitative studies. Gathering information on important competencies for the selection of effective school leaders from principals' perceptions is important. It is also important to assess whether these competencies were considered when the principals were



selected. Given the number of principals that were surveyed, a maximum of 360, and their locations, using a survey was the best way to collect the data, as opposed to observations or personal interviews, which would be time consuming. Additionally, the information collected through observations and interviews would not be appropriate for statistical analysis.

For the purpose of this survey, a list of competencies was used. These competencies refer to the 21 responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. (2005) related to effective school principals. The web-based survey tool Zoomerang (n.d.) was used to create the online survey. Zoomerang allowed respondents to complete the survey from just about anywhere by using the link. Additionally, it offered a cost-effective solution that enabled the researcher to collect data quickly and efficiently from the participants.

The survey question prompt was, “When selecting/hiring a principal, I perceive this competency to be important.” Each of the 21 competencies was listed alphabetically along with the definitions as presented by Marzano et al. (2005). The 21 competencies and definitions are listed in Table 1. For those competencies the principals perceived to be important by responding strongly agree or agree, the participant was asked to how those competencies (responsibilities) were assessed during their selection as principal. The participant was prompted to select from a list of options that included application, presentation as part of the interview, interview with selection committee, interview with superintendent, not assessed, and other

(with an opportunity to write in a response). These options allowed the response to be quantified and determination of how the responsibilities were assessed.

## **Procedures**

Data were collected from the participants identified from CREATE data on high-performing elementary, middle, and high schools used for this study. A maximum of 360 high-performing schools was identified. The e-mail address for each principal participant was obtained from the campus websites. The principals received a letter via e-mail that invited them to participate in the study and included a web link to the survey (Appendix B). The survey was delivered electronically by using the web-based tool, Zoomerang (n.d.). The web link took the participating principal to the Zoomerang website and prompted him or her to complete the actual survey (Appendix A). For those campuses where an electronic survey was not an option, a paper copy of the survey was mailed to the principal. Once the survey was completed, the web link automatically entered the results into the Zoomerang database, which then was exported to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Manual entries were made for the completed paper copy surveys onto the Excel spreadsheet. One follow-up e-mail reminder was sent to the principals who did not complete the survey within an allotted time frame.

## **Variables**

For the purpose of this study, the competencies identified by Marzano et al. (2005) served as independent variables (Table 2). The selection process was the dependent variable.

Table 2

*Principal Competencies*

Competency	Definition
Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates accomplishment and acknowledges failures
Change agent	Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo
Contingent rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments
Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students
Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and sense of community and cooperation
Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus
Flexibility	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent
Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention
Ideals and beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling
Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies
Intellectual stimulation	Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Monitoring/evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning
Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations
Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines
Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
Relationship	Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff
Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs
Situational awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems
Visibility	Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students

*Note.* Source: *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results*, by R. J. Marzano, T. Waters, and B. A. McNulty, 2005, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The survey measured, from a principal's perspective, the importance of each of the responsibilities of a principal at an effective school. A 5-point Likert scale provided the following possible responses: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. According to Suskie (1996), these data are considered interval data, and they were analyzed accordingly in this study. The survey instrument included the description of competencies, as defined by Marzano et al. and displayed in Table 2.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected from the surveys were analyzed for each of the research questions. This section outlines the type of analysis that was completed specific to each of the questions using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

**Research Question 1: What do principals perceive to be important competencies in the selection of an effective school leader?** For this question, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Numeric values for the five response choices were assigned: 5 = *strongly agree*; 4 = *agree*; 3 = *neutral*; 2 = *disagree*; 1 = *strongly disagree*. The mean scores for the respondents for each of the 21 competencies were calculated. The percentage of principals endorsing each of the competencies by choosing agree or strongly agree on the corresponding survey question also was calculated and analyzed using SPSS.

**Research Question 2: How were the competencies of effective school principals assessed during the selection process?** Descriptive statistics were used

to analyze the data for this question. The selected responses for each of the corresponding competencies were calculated and analyzed independently. The six response choices were (a) application, (b) presentation as part of the interview, (c) interview with committee, (d) interview with superintendent/designee, (e) not assessed, and (f) other. The mean was calculated by the number of choices selected as a response for each competency, and the percentage will be determined to measure how the responsibility was assessed. This analysis was completed using SPSS.

**Research Question 3: What are the differences in the importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary, middle, and high school)?** Analysis of the survey data for this question required a comparison of the responses by school level. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, and the mean was reported. In order to compare the responses, the mean was calculated for each competency for each campus level: elementary school, middle school, and high school. The mean for each competency was then analyzed and reported. In addition, the differences in the means between elementary school and middle school, middle school and high school, and elementary school and high school were analyzed and reported.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided information regarding the methods and research design, participants, procedures, instrument, and data analysis for this research study. This description set the framework for conducting the study and arriving at the answers for the three research questions guiding this research project. Following is Chapter 4, which presents an analysis of the data. This analysis includes, from the perception of

principals, the importance of the 21 competencies when selecting a principal and which of these responsibilities were assessed when they were hired as a principal. Additionally, the importance of these 21 competencies was assessed based on the campus level.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The purpose of this study was to examine which competencies are considered important for the selection of principals from the perspective of effective principals on the Texas–Mexico border and how these competencies were assessed during the selection process. In addition, the study sought to determine any differences related to the importance of the identified competencies of effective principal by school level: elementary, middle, and high school. Three research questions guided the study:

1. What competencies do principals perceive to be important in the selection of an effective school leader?
2. How are the competencies of effective school principals assessed during the selection process?
3. What are the differences in the importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary, middle school, high school)?

This chapter first provides a description of the demographic data of the study. Then, the data regarding what principals perceived to be important in the selection of an effective school leader are presented and explained, including the narrative responses describing additional competencies perceived to be important. The data on how the competencies of effective school leaders were assessed during the selection process are presented, including the narrative responses identifying additional ways the competencies were assessed during the selection process other than those included in the survey. The chapter concludes with the data on the differences in the

importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary, middle school, high school).

### **Demographic Description of the Sample**

The population for this study was effective school principals serving in schools along the Texas–Mexico border. The focus on student achievement, by default, has defined effectiveness of a school principal. Two levels of sample selection were employed: selection of high-performing campuses and selection of effective principals. The list of high-performing schools was determined from data provided by CREATE to universities. Annually, CREATE compiles and provides this report to universities across the state that includes a list of the 30 highest performing high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools within a 75-mile radius from the university, in this case, The University of Texas–Pan American and The University of Texas at El Paso. The criteria used to identify the high-performing schools by CREATE were based on the campuses' TAKS scores on math or reading for the 2009–2010 school year. Although it was expected that the identified high-performing schools had attained an Exemplary rating, this might not necessarily have been the case, and therefore a minimum of a 75% passing rate in the reading or math TAKS for the 2009–2010 school year was also required to be considered a high-performing school. The lists were cross-referenced in order to avoid duplication. A total of 218 campuses met the aforementioned criteria from the original list of 360 high-performing schools.



Once a campus was identified as high performing using the CREATE data and the minimum passing standard, only principals in schools with a majority Hispanic student population during the 2009–2010 school year were considered for this study. The principals of the 217 campuses identified using the aforementioned criteria were invited to complete the survey. A total of 138 principals responded to the survey, or 64%. Of the respondents surveyed, only those who were the principal of the identified high-performing campus during the 2009-2010 school year were used in the analysis of the data, for a total of 100 survey responses.

The demographic section of the survey asked the principals questions related to their background. These included gender, ethnicity or race, tenure, campus level, student enrollment, number of Hispanic students, and whether years of principal experience were all in the same district. The demographic data of the surveys indicated that most of the respondents (64 of the 100) were female principals (Table 3).

Ethnicity was also part of the demographic data collected (Table 3). The survey results indicated the majority of the principals are Hispanic (63%), followed by 34% White and the remaining identifying themselves as Black or other (Table 3).

The tenure of the principals participating in the study indicated only 9% of the respondents had 1–3 years of experience. In contrast, 54% of the respondents indicated their tenure to be over 8 years (Table 3).

Table 3

*Respondents' Demographics (N = 100)*

Demographic	<i>n</i>
Gender	
Female	64
Male	36
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	63
White	34
Black	2
Other	1
Tenure as principal	
1–3 years	9
4–7 years	37
8–10 years	15
11–15 years	19
15+ years	20

Survey respondents were also asked to identify the campus level they served during the time of the study. The results indicated a close distribution among elementary, middle, and high school principals (Table 4). In addition, the respondents were asked to provide information regarding student enrollment. The majority of the principals responding to the survey (67%) indicated the enrollment at their campus was between 501 and 1,000 students (see Table 4). In essence, 89% of the respondents were serving at campuses with 500 students or more.

The demographic data also showed that principals participating in the study were serving campuses with a student population consisting of primarily Hispanics. The data indicated that all principals participating in the study were serving at campuses that included over 50% Hispanic students. In fact, the majority (64%)

reported that their student population consisted of 91% or more Hispanic students (Table 4).

Table 4

*Respondents' Campus Data and Demographics (N = 100)*

Demographic	<i>n</i>
Campus level	
Elementary school	39
Middle school	33
High school	27
K-12	1
Student enrollment	
251–500	11
501–1,000	67
1,001–1,500	4
1,501+	18
Proportion of Hispanic students	
51–90%	36
91%+	64

Finally, respondents were asked if their years of experience as a principal were all served at their current district. The data revealed this to be the case for the majority of the principals (85%). Only 15 of the 100 principals participating in the study indicated their experience as a principal went beyond their current district.

### **Results for Research Question 1**

What competencies do principals perceive to be important in the selection of an effective school leader? For this question, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Numeric values for the five response choices were assigned: 5 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 2 = *disagree*, and 1 = *strongly disagree*. Each

competency was analyzed independently of the others to determine the number of principals who endorsed each of the competencies and which of the competencies they perceived to be important in the selection of an effective school leader.

Results from Part 2 of the survey (Appendix A) indicated that the respondents perceived the 21 competencies identified in the literature (Marzano et al., 2005) as being important to consider in the selection of an effective principal. The competencies are affirmation; change agent; contingent rewards; communication; culture; discipline; flexibility; focus; ideals and beliefs; input; intellectual stimulation; involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; monitoring and evaluating; optimizer; order; outreach; relationships; resources; situational awareness; and visibility. Table 2 in Chapter 3 displays the competencies and their definitions.

Only two principals indicated they disagreed with contingent rewards as being important, and one principal indicated optimizer was not important. In essence, these respondents disagreed that recognizing and rewarding individual accomplishments and inspiring and leading new and challenging innovations were important to consider when selecting an effective school leader. On the other hand, all respondents agreed that the principal's ability to communicate (i.e., establishing strong lines of communication with and among teachers) was the single most important competency of the 21 listed when selecting a principal (Table 5). Moreover, 77 principals (84.6%) strongly agreed and the remaining principals

(15.4%) agreed that communication was an important competency to consider when selecting an effective principal.

Table 5

*Competencies in Descending Order by Percentage of Respondents Strongly Agreeing With Importance*

Competency	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Communication	77	84.6	14	15.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Visibility	75	85.2	10	11.4	3	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Focus	67	73.6	23	25.3	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	67	73.6	23	25.3	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Culture	67	72.8	25	27.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Resources	66	73.3	17	18.9	7	7.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	65	72.2	24	26.7	1	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Outreach	62	70.5	20	22.7	6	6.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Monitoring and evaluating	61	67.8	24	26.7	5	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
Situational awareness	61	67.8	22	24.4	7	7.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Ideals/beliefs	62	67.4	27	29.3	3	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Discipline	59	64.8	27	29.7	5	5.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Input	59	64.1	31	33.7	2	2.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Order	58	64.4	25	27.8	7	7.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Affirmation	55	60.4	35	38.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.1
Flexibility	53	59.6	33	37.1	3	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Relationships	52	58.4	31	34.8	6	6.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Optimizer	50	56.2	31	34.8	7	7.9	1	1.1	1	1.3
Contingent rewards	46	52.3	34	38.6	6	6.8	2	2.3	2	2.6
Intellectual stimulation	46	51.1	37	41.1	7	7.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Change agent	46	50.0	43	46.7	3	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0

*Note.* *N* = 100; however, the number of respondents answering each survey item varied from 88–92.

Table 5 shows the number and percentage of principals who endorsed each of the 21 competencies identified in the literature as important in an effective school leader. To simply results, Table 6 shows the number and percentage of respondents indicating either *agree* or *strongly agree* combined for each competency.

Table 6

*Respondents Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing With Importance of Each Competency*

Competency	<i>n</i>	%
Communication	91	100.0
Culture	92	100.0
Focus	90	98.9
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	90	98.9
Input	90	97.8
Affirmation	90	98.9
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	89	98.9
Ideals/beliefs	89	96.7
Change agent	89	96.7
Discipline	86	94.5
Flexibility	86	96.6
Visibility	85	96.6
Monitoring and evaluating	85	94.4
Resources	83	92.2
Situational awareness	83	92.2
Order	83	92.2
Relationships	83	93.3
Intellectual stimulation	83	92.2
Outreach	82	93.2
Optimizer	81	91.0
Contingent rewards	80	90.9

*Note.* *N* = 100; however, the number of respondents answering each survey item varied from 88–92.

Although most of the competencies were endorsed by the principals responding to the survey, not all were endorsed to the same degree. Visibility received the second-highest endorsement by the participants of the study. For this competency, defined as the principal having quality contact and interaction with teachers and students, 85.2% of the principals strongly agreed and 11.4% agreed, with 3.4% remaining neutral that this competency was important to consider. Two competencies, focus and involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, received the next highest endorsement by the respondents at 73.6% of the responding principals. This means that a principal's ability to establish clear goals and keep those goals in the forefront of the school's attention and the ability to get directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices are very important to consider in the hiring process.

All but three of the competencies had at least one respondent mark *neutral* or *strongly disagree* as the answer choice, indicating that he or she would not endorse these competencies as being important to consider when selecting an effective school leader. One respondent marked *strongly disagree* when asked if the competency of affirmation, which refers to the principal's ability to recognize and celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge failures, was important to consider in the hiring process of effective school leaders.

For only two competencies, communication (defined as the principal's ability to establish strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students) and culture (defined as principal's ability to foster shared beliefs and sense of community

and cooperation), all respondents marked *strongly agree* or *agree* regarding importance in the hiring process. On the other hand, three competencies were marked *strongly agree* by less than 50 of the 100 principals responding to the survey, thus indicating less of an importance when selecting an effective school leader: contingent rewards, intellectual stimulation, and change agent. Some of the respondents also marked *neutral* or *disagree* for these competencies, further minimizing their importance in the hiring process. Contingent rewards was the lowest ranked competency, with 90.1% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with its importance and 2.3% disagreeing.

An alternative way of analyzing the results is by calculating the mean to determine which competencies the respondents perceived as important in the selection of an effective school leader (Table 7). The means for all 21 competencies were between *agree* (4.0) and *strongly agree* (5.0). The competency of communication had the highest mean, at 4.85. Only four competencies had mean values smaller than 4.5: contingent rewards ( $M = 4.41$ ), intellectual stimulation ( $M = 4.43$ ), change agent ( $M = 4.47$ ), and optimizer ( $M = 4.48$ ).

The competency of communication had a mean of 4.85, indicating that the respondents perceived that the ability of a principal to communicate (i.e., establishing strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students) was the most important competency to consider of the 21 listed when selecting a principal. Visibility, defined as having quality contact with teachers and students, received the next highest mean at 4.82, indicating this competency was perceived as being almost



equally important. The competency of contingent reward, or the principal's ability to recognize and reward individual accomplishments, had the lowest mean, 4.41, indicating that the respondents believed it was the least important competency to consider when hiring a principal.

Table 7

*Competencies in Descending Order by Mean Rating*

Competency	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Communication	91	4.85	0.363
Visibility	88	4.82	0.468
Culture	92	4.73	0.447
Focus	91	4.73	0.473
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	91	4.73	0.473
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	90	4.71	0.480
Resources	90	4.66	0.621
Ideals/beliefs	92	4.64	0.546
Outreach	88	4.64	0.610
Monitoring/evaluating	90	4.62	0.592
Input	92	4.62	0.531
Situational awareness	90	4.60	0.632
Discipline	91	4.59	0.596
Affirmation	91	4.57	0.617
Order	90	4.57	0.637
Flexibility	89	4.56	0.563
Relationships	89	4.52	0.624
Optimizer	89	4.48	0.642
Change agent	92	4.47	0.564
Intellectual stimulation	90	4.43	0.637
Contingent rewards	88	4.41	0.721

*Note.* Mean score based on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The next three highest rated competencies had a mean value of 4.73 with 91 or more principals responding to the survey item: culture, which means the principal fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation; focus, which relates

to the principal establishing clear goals and keeping those goals in the forefront of the school's attention; and involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, defined as the principal being directly involved in the design and the implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Coupled with the two competencies with the greatest mean, communication and visibility, these three competencies were perceived among the top five most important to consider when selecting a school leader, according to the participants of the study.

Principals responding to the survey were also asked to list any other competency they perceived to be important to consider when selecting effective principals. The statements provided by the respondents and the accompanying definitions were used to identify the emerging competencies (Table 8). The data revealed eight other competencies: (a) finance, (b) knowledge about special needs, (c) data-driven decision making, (d) loyalty, (e) ethics, (f) triage partnering, (g) professional development, and (h) balance. As shown in Table 8, respondents also indicated flexibility, one of the existing 21 competencies.

From the eight additional competencies participants mentioned, only one was listed multiple times by the respondents, which was evident in the various definitions provided for the competency of data-driven decision making. Data-driven decision making, or data analysis, was listed by three respondents as an additional competency to consider in the hiring of a principal; each provided similar definitions for this competency, thus making it the premier emerging competency. The process of data-driven decision making includes collecting appropriate data about student academic

achievement, analyzing the data, presenting the data to those in charge of making decisions for student academic improvement (administrators, teachers, and parents), and using the data to inform decisions to set classroom and campus-wide goals.

Table 8

*Emerging Competencies*

Competency	Definitions
Data-driven decision making	<p>“Is able to analyze campus test data and determine instructional gaps for goal setting and targeting.”</p> <p>“Knowledge and skill to interpret and make changes based on data collected.”</p> <p>“Finding a way to reach a goal without looking for excuses”</p>
Finance	“Principal has a working knowledge of budget.”
Knowledge about special needs	“Understands programs including Special Ed, Bilingual, Gifted and Talented, Migrant, At Risk, etc.”
Loyalty	No definition given
Ethics	“Holds her/himself to a high level of professional standards of conduct.”
Triage partnering	“Student, parent, school partnering in instructional program.”
Professional development	“Is able to determine professional development needs based on data analysis.”
Balance	“Ability to keep work and personal life in equal increments.”

Additionally, the study focused on the mechanisms used to actually assess the identified competencies during the hiring process. Therefore, respondents were asked to list the ways in which these were evaluated when they were hired as a principal.

Results are presented in the next section.

## **Results for Research Question 2**

How are the competencies of effective school principals assessed during the selection process? Principals participating in the study who agreed or strongly agreed

with the competencies were asked a follow-up question: “For those competencies you mark Strongly Agree or Agree, please select all the choices that describe how the competency was assessed when you were selected as a principal.” Respondents were asked to mark all the answer choices that described how the competency was assessed during the hiring process from a list that included (a) application, (b) presentation at interview, (c) interview with committee, (d) interview with superintendent or designee, (e) not assessed, and (f) other. The answer choice of “other” allowed the respondents to list additional ways in which the competency might have been assessed.

Most of the principals responding to the survey indicated that the 21 competencies were assessed during an interview with a committee or with the superintendent or designee (Table 9). Furthermore, whereas some principals indicated that the competencies were also assessed in the application or in a presentation at the interview, some indicated the competencies were not assessed at all. In some cases, the competency was assessed using a different method than those provided by the survey altogether.

Table 9

*Competencies Assessed in Hiring Process*

Competency	Application		Presentation at interview		Interview with committee		Interview with superintendent or designee		Not assessed	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Communication	14	15.4	30	33.0	72	79.1	47	51.6	4	4.4
Visibility	7	8.2	20	23.5	51	60.0	31	36.5	19	22.4
Focus	14	15.6	26	28.9	67	74.4	42	46.7	6	6.7
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	13	14.4	27	30.0	56	62.2	40	44.4	15	16.7
Culture	10	10.9	23	25.0	68	73.9	44	47.8	10	10.9
Resources	5	6.0	18	21.7	46	55.4	27	32.5	24	28.9
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	13	14.6	26	29.2	64	71.9	42	47.2	6	6.7
Outreach	9	11.0	16	19.5	52	63.4	41	50.0	13	15.9
Monitoring and evaluating	9	10.6	21	24.7	51	60.0	35	41.2	19	22.4
Situational awareness	6	7.2	15	18.1	42	50.6	27	32.5	27	32.5
Ideals/beliefs	15	16.9	22	24.7	67	75.3	42	47.2	8	9.0
Discipline	9	10.5	13	15.1	50	58.1	30	34.9	21	24.4
Input	9	10.0	24	26.7	61	67.8	32	35.6	11	12.2
Order	9	10.8	16	19.3	51	61.4	32	38.6	19	22.9
Affirmation	22	24.4	24	26.7	53	58.9	35	38.9	19	21.1
Flexibility	8	9.3	19	22.1	51	59.3	34	39.5	18	20.9
Relationships	7	8.4	18	21.7	41	49.4	29	34.9	28	33.7
Optimizer	9	11.1	19	23.5	39	48.1	33	40.7	27	33.3
Contingent rewards	12	14.8	16	19.8	40	49.4	29	35.8	27	33.3
Intellectual stimulation	9	10.8	18	21.7	39	47.0	24	28.9	30	36.1
Change agent	12	13.5	19	21.3	60	67.4	38	42.7	11	12.4

*Note.* *N* = 82–92. Participants could select more than one option (other than not assessed), so percentages do not total 100%.

The results of the data revealed that the single most used method for assessing the competencies was in an interview with a committee. At least 50% of the principals surveyed reported all but 4 of the 21 competencies were assessed during an interview with a committee when they were hired as a principal. Furthermore, four competencies were certain to be assessed using this method: focus (74.4%), culture (73.9%), ideals and beliefs (75.3%), and communication (79.1%). It is important to note, however, that less than 50% of the principals reported that four other competencies were not assessed in an interview with a committee when they were hired: intellectual stimulation (47%), optimizer (48.1%), contingent rewards (49.4%), and relationships (49.4%).

The second-most used method to assess the competencies was in an interview with the superintendent or designee. Over 32% of the respondents indicated this method was used to assess the 21 competencies when they were employed as a principal. This second-most used method led the application and the presentation at the interview as ways in which the competencies are assessed during the hiring process, according to the principals. According to the results of the survey, however, some competencies were more likely to be assessed during the interview with the superintendent or designee. These competencies were communication (51.6%), defined as the principal's ability to establish strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students, and outreach (50%), referred to as the principal being an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders.

The interview with the committee and the interview with the superintendent or designee were the two methods most used by the school districts to assess the competencies when selecting a school principal. Interestingly enough, the participants in the study reported these two hiring process methods were the primary way for assessing all the competencies, particularly communication; focus; culture; outreach; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and ideals and beliefs.

Additionally, Table 9 shows that the application was not the most common method used to assess the 21 competencies perceived by principals as important in the selection of an effective school leader. In fact, less than 17% of the respondents indicated that any of the competencies were assessed in the application, with the exception of affirmation (24.4%). Although at least six respondents indicated the application was a method to assess all the 21 competencies, they did not perceive it to be widely used.

On the other hand, at least 18% or more of the respondents reported the presentation in the interview was also a method used to assess all 21 competencies, with the exception of discipline (15.1%). In fact, at least one fourth of the principals reported a presentation was used to assess 8 of the 21 competencies. The two competencies most often assessed using this method were communication (33%) and involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment (30%).

Even though all 21 competencies were endorsed at the *strongly agree* or *agree* level as important in the selection of effective school leaders (Table 6), some

principals reported that these competencies were not assessed when they were selected as a campus principal. When analyzing these data (Table 9), it is important to keep in mind that while principals responding to the survey were asked to mark all the answer choices that applied when indicating the method used to assess the competency during the selection process, when a principal indicated it was not assessed, this was the only answer choice they marked. In other words, selecting the answer choice “not assessed” voided the remaining answer choices. Over 30% of the principals responding to the survey declared that whereas all 21 competencies are important to consider in the selection process, this was not the case when they were hired. Over one third of the participants in the study reported five competencies were not assessed at all: intellectual stimulation (36.1%), relationships (33.7%), optimizer (33.3%), contingent rewards (33.3%), and situational awareness (32.5%)

A closer look at the data identified some competencies that very few of the respondents indicated were not assessed. For instance, only 4.4% of the respondents indicated communication was not assessed when they were selected as a principal. This means that 95.6% of the respondents to the survey reported this as a competency that was assessed through a variety of methods (i.e., application, presentation at interview, interview with a committee, or interview with superintendent or designee). Other competencies reported as not assessed by a small percentage of respondents included focus (6.7%); knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (6.7%); and ideals and beliefs (9%). This, in turn, means these competencies were assessed during the selection process as reported by 91% or more of the principals surveyed.



The respondents were also given the opportunity to identify other ways in which the competencies might have been assessed during the time they were hired as a principal by marking the answer choice “other, please specify.” This allowed the principals an opportunity to share other hiring process methods not considered in the answer choices. Although the number of principals indicating the competencies were assessed using another method was minimal and did not exceed 10%, it is important to report what these methods were (Table 10).

Table 10

*Other Methods of Assessing the Competencies*

Competency	<i>n</i>	%	Methods
Communication	6	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References</li> <li>• Administrative experience in the district</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> </ul>
Visibility	9	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Familiarity with the community</li> </ul>
Focus	6	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central Office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	8	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Experience with curriculum as an assistant principal</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> <li>• References</li> </ul>
Culture	6	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Resources	7	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Effective two-way communication</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>

Table 10 (cont.)

Competency	<i>n</i>	%	Methods
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	8	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Experience with curriculum and instruction</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> <li>• References</li> </ul>
Outreach	8	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiar with the community</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Monitoring and evaluating	5	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written prompt</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> </ul>
Situational awareness	8	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Familiarity with the community</li> <li>• Writing prompt of responding to situations</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> </ul>
Ideals/beliefs	9	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> <li>• Personal background</li> </ul>
Discipline	4	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Citing standards goals/beliefs</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Input	9	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References</li> <li>• Campus Leadership Team member</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Order	8	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Goals and standards</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Affirmation	5	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Résumé</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>

Table 10 (cont.)

Competency	<i>n</i>	%	Methods
Flexibility	9	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Expressing goals/achievements</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Relationships	8	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• References</li> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Leadership qualities</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Optimizer	8	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Writing prompt</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Contingent rewards	4	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> </ul>
Intellectual stimulation	5	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Citing goals and expectations for teachers</li> </ul>
Change agent	5	6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gallup Survey</li> <li>• Central office interviewed staff previously supervised</li> <li>• Administrative performance in the district</li> <li>• Experience as the Dean of Instruction</li> </ul>

According to the respondents, the other methods centered primarily on three areas of the selection process. For example, most of the participants in the study who marked “other” listed reference checks or “consulting with previous employers” as a means for assessing the competencies and determining prior experience and past job performance. Second, the results of a Gallup Survey, which measured the strengths and weaknesses of the applicant seeking employment, was another method used for assessing the competencies. Third, the superintendent’s knowledge of the applicant

and familiarity with the school community was another way the competencies were assessed. Finally, several principals indicated they were simply “appointed” to the position. It can be assumed that these principals possessed each of the competencies since the superintendent had the confidence to simply appoint them to the position of principal.

### **Results for Research Question 3**

A third question guiding this study was used to determine whether the importance of the 21 competencies, as perceived by principals, differed based on the campus level. More specifically, Research Question 3 was as follows: What are the differences in the importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary school, middle school, high school)?

The demographics from the data revealed that of 100 respondents, 99 principals could be categorized into three campus levels: elementary, middle, and high school. The other respondent served a K-12 campus. The number of elementary-only principals participating in the study slightly exceeded the two other school levels, as was shown in Table 4. The least number of respondents came from the high school level for a combined total of 99 principals participating in the study from the three campus levels.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the categories to determine the difference in the importance of the 21 competencies by campus level. The mean was calculated by campus level for each of the competencies (Table 11) and a comparison of each campus level was calculated (Table 12).

Table 11

*Means and Standard Deviations Showing Endorsement of the Competencies by Campus Level*

Competency	Elementary		Middle		High	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Communication	4.86	0.356	4.85	0.368	4.86	0.359
Visibility	4.75	0.585	4.81	0.402	4.95	0.218
Focus	4.75	0.441	4.69	0.471	4.86	0.359
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment	4.75	0.441	4.73	0.452	4.81	0.402
Culture	4.82	0.390	4.65	0.485	4.71	0.463
Resources	4.75	0.518	4.69	0.549	4.71	0.561
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	4.71	0.460	4.81	0.402	4.71	0.463
Outreach	4.68	0.612	4.62	0.571	4.81	0.402
Monitoring and evaluating	4.71	0.535	4.73	0.452	4.62	0.498
Situational awareness	4.57	0.690	4.54	0.647	4.76	0.436
Ideals/beliefs	4.64	0.559	4.58	0.578	4.81	0.512
Discipline	4.50	0.745	4.65	0.562	4.67	0.483
Input	4.57	0.573	4.54	0.508	4.81	0.402
Order	4.64	0.678	4.54	0.582	4.57	0.598
Affirmation	4.61	0.497	4.58	0.504	4.43	0.926
Flexibility	4.61	0.497	4.54	0.582	4.62	0.590
Relationships	4.64	0.621	4.27	0.667	4.52	0.512
Optimizer	4.54	0.576	4.46	0.582	4.62	0.590
Contingent rewards	4.43	0.836	4.23	0.587	4.57	0.598
Intellectual stimulation	4.43	0.634	4.50	0.510	4.52	0.602
Change agent	4.43	0.573	4.50	0.510	4.38	0.669

*Note.* Mean score based on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

In reviewing the mean to determine any differences in importance of the 21 competencies by campus level, it is important to remember that all the competencies were endorsed by the participants in the study at the *strongly agree* or *agree* level. In some cases, however, the degree to which each competency was endorsed differed. This is true when reviewing the mean for each campus level as well. The means for

all campus levels ranged from a low of 4.23 to a high of 4.95, with the high school principals' endorsement of the importance of visibility, referred to as the principal having quality contact and interactions with teachers as students.

Table 12

*Differences in Means by Campus Level*

Competency	Elementary – middle school	Elementary – high school	Middle – high school
Communication	0.01	0.00	–0.01
Visibility	–0.06	–0.20	–0.14
Focus	0.06	–0.11	–0.16
Involvement in curriculum, instruction, & assessment	0.02	–0.06	–0.08
Culture	0.17	0.11	–0.06
Resources	0.06	0.04	–0.02
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, & assessment	–0.09	0.00	0.09
Outreach	0.06	–0.13	–0.19
Monitoring and evaluating	–0.02	0.10	0.11
Situational awareness	0.03	–0.19	–0.22
Ideals/beliefs	0.07	–0.17	–0.23
Discipline	–0.15	–0.17	–0.01
Input	0.03	–0.24	–0.27
Order	0.10	0.07	–0.03
Affirmation	0.03	0.18	0.15
Flexibility	0.07	–0.01	–0.08
Relationships	0.37	0.12	–0.25
Optimizer	0.07	–0.08	–0.16
Contingent rewards	0.20	–0.14	–0.34
Intellectual stimulation	–0.07	–0.10	–0.02
Change agent	–0.07	0.05	0.12

*Note.* Mean score based on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Interestingly enough, whereas the elementary principals also endorsed the importance of visibility, they did so with a mean of 4.75, or the lowest of the three groups. On the other hand, both the elementary and middle school respondents perceived communication, defined as the principal establishing strong lines of

communication with and among teachers and students, to be the most important, with means of 4.86 and 4.85, respectively. The mean for the high school principals was 4.86, which was similar to the other two groups but not greater than the importance of visibility ( $M = 4.95$ ).

The mean range for the three campus levels differed even though all were between the *agree* (4.0) and *strongly agree* (5.0) levels. The mean range and the corresponding competency for elementary principals were 4.43 (change agent and intellectual stimulation) to 4.86 (communication). For the middle school principals, the mean range was 4.23 (contingent rewards) to 4.85 (communication). On the other hand, for the high school principals, responses resulted in a mean range that included a high of almost 5.0, or the strongest mean for any competency. The range was 4.38 (change agent, where the principal is willing to and actively challenges the status quo) to 4.95 (visibility, where the principal values quality contact with teachers and students).

In addition, the four competencies receiving the greatest endorsement by all the participants in the study—communication; visibility; focus; and involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment—differed in their degree of endorsements when comparing the mean responses by campus level. For example, the high school principals perceived the competencies of visibility ( $M = 4.95$ ) and focus ( $M = 4.86$ ) as more important than did elementary and middle school principals. The same was true for the competency of involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment ( $M = 4.81$ ), where the principal is directly involved in the design and implementation of

curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. The high school principals perceived this competency to be more important than did the other two groups of principals, although the mean difference was not significant.

The mean difference for each campus level also proved to be true for the four competencies perceived to be least important in the selection of an effective school principal. In fact, 2 of the 4 competencies were perceived to be more important by the high school and elementary principals than the middle school principals (see Table 12). These included optimizer, where the principal inspires and leads new and challenging innovations, and contingent rewards, where the principal recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments.

The results of the study showed the greater mean difference for the campus levels to be centered around some competencies in particular. For example, a mean difference of at least  $-0.2$  or more was reported in the middle school principals' responses when compared to elementary and high school principals' responses in at least two competencies: relationships and contingent rewards. This, in essence, indicated less importance for these two competencies when hiring a middle school principal as compared to the other campus levels. In contrast, greater mean differences between the principals were evident in three competencies perceived by the high school principals as more important to consider during the hiring process than by the elementary and middle school principals. The competencies were situational awareness, where the principal is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential



problems; ideals and beliefs, the principal's ability to communicate and operate from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling; and input, the involvement of teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies. In essence, these were perceived to be less important in the selection of principals other than high school principals.

Interestingly enough, the competency of culture, the principal's ability to foster shared beliefs and sense of community and cooperation, was perceived to be more important when hiring an elementary principal as compared to any other type. This competency had one of the stronger means for the elementary principals of the 21 competencies. Of the three campus levels, the middle school principals expressed the least importance of this competency. A principal's ability to establish a set of standard operating procedures and routines (order) and the ability to demonstrate awareness for the personal aspects of teachers and staff (relationships) were two additional competencies the respondents perceived to be more important for elementary school principals than for middle or high school principals. This is certainly aligned with the perception of elementary schools, where structure and warmth is evident in high-performing campuses.

Tables 11 and 12 show that the greatest disparity among the three campus levels was in their declared importance of the competency of contingent rewards, where the principal recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments. The largest difference existed between the high school principals and the middle school principals, with a mean difference of 0.34 (Table 12). The high school principals

were more likely to believe it is important to possess this competency than were the middle school and elementary school principals. A similar mean difference existed between elementary and middle school principals when considering the importance of relationships, or the principal's ability to demonstrate an awareness of the persona aspects of teachers and staff. With a mean difference of 0.37, the elementary principals participating in the study perceived this to be more important than their colleagues at the other campus levels. This was also true when comparing the high school and middle school principals. With a mean difference of 0.25, high school principals report a greater importance for the competency of relationships (Table 12).

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of these data to examine the relationships with previous research. The implications of the study for those responsible for the selection of school principals, including superintendents, and for principal preparation programs is examined, and suggestions are made for future research.

## **Chapter 5: Summary of the Findings, Conclusions, and Implications for Future Research**

The increased demands and the complexity of the role of school leaders make the selection of principals a critical responsibility of human resource managers and the superintendent. Furthermore, one of the potential consequences of NCLB is the importance of selecting and placing an effective principal in every school to maximize student achievement. However, the selection of principals as an important initial action to ensure student achievement has primarily been addressed by superintendent perspectives (Rammer, 2007). Therefore, this study focused on competencies perceived by effective principals to be important for the selection of effective school leaders.

This chapter includes a summary of the findings of this research with respect to the three questions of the study, the relationship of this research and previous work addressed in this study, the implications of this study for the practice of school leadership, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine which competencies are considered important in the selection of principals from the perspectives of effective principals on the Texas–Mexico border and how these competencies were assessed during the hiring process. Specifically, the study examined principals’ perspectives about the importance, in the selection of school leaders, of the competencies initially identified by Marzano et al. (2005) of effective K-12 principals. In addition, the study was

designed to determine any differences related to the importance of the identified competencies of effective principal by campus level: elementary, middle, and high school. A total of 100 principals were part of this study. Of these, 36 were serving elementary schools, 29 were serving middle schools, and 27 were serving high schools. One principal led a K-12 campus. Only principals serving in the selected schools during the 2009-2010 school year participated in the study.

### **Research Questions**

Three questions guided this study:

1. What competencies do principals perceive to be important in the selection of an effective school leader?
2. How are the competencies of effective school principals assessed during the selection process?
3. What are the differences in the importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary, middle school, and high school)?

### **Participants**

The research study focused on effective school principals on the Texas–Mexico border. Two levels of participant selection were employed: selection of high-performing campuses and selection of principals of majority-Hispanic schools. The list of identified high-performing schools for the 2009–2010 school year provided to two universities, The University of Texas–Pan American and The University of Texas at El Paso, by CREATE was used to identify the high-performing schools along the Texas–Mexico border. Although the identified high-performing

schools were expected to have attained an Exemplary rating, a minimum of 75% passing rate in the reading or math TAKS for the 2009–2010 school year also was required in order to be considered a high-performing school.

The principals of the schools identified as high performing, based on aforementioned criteria, were identified as possible participants of the study. The principals were invited to participate in the study only if they were the principal of the selected school during the 2009–2010 school year. A total of 100 principals were part of this study.

### **Instrument**

This research study employed an existing survey that was used in a study by Rammer (2007) in Wisconsin. Permission was requested and granted to use and to slightly modify the existing survey. Face and content validity were established by Rammer for the survey instrument using an expert panel of three Southeast Wisconsin public school superintendents and a peer-review panel of three doctoral students. Rammer also conducted a pilot study of the survey to establish instrument reliability, test the response rate of the survey, identify any problems with the electronic distribution of the e-mail instruction of the survey, identify any problems with the survey questions, and test the collection and technical manipulation of the data. This descriptive, electronic survey instrument was used to collect data from the selected principals. The survey consisted of two parts. Part 1 asked participants questions related to demographics, including gender, race, and years of experience, and questions regarding the type of school they are leading. Part 2 asked the participants

to identify the competencies they considered to be important when hiring a principal. A follow-up statement asked the participants to describe for those competencies they marked as *strongly agree* or *agree* how the competency was assessed when they were selected as a principal.

### **Summary of Findings and Discussion**

The section below provides a summary of the findings for each of the research questions that guided the study. The findings include which competencies respondents rated as important to consider when selecting a principal; what methods were used to assess the competencies; and differences in the importance of the competencies between elementary, middle school, and high school principals.

**Competencies principals perceived to be important in the selection of an effective school leader.** The first question of the study asked which of the 21 competencies the respondents perceived to be important to consider in the selection of campus principals. Numeric values for the five response choices were assigned (5 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 2 = *disagree*, and 1 = *strongly disagree*), and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Findings indicate that the respondents perceived the 21 competencies identified in the literature (Marzano et al. 2005) as being important to consider in the selection of an effective principal: affirmation; change agent; contingent rewards; communication; culture; discipline; flexibility; focus; ideals and beliefs; input; intellectual stimulation; involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; monitoring and evaluating; optimizer; order; outreach; relationships;

resources; situational awareness; and visibility. All respondents agreed that the principal's ability to communicate (i.e., establishing strong lines of communication with and among teachers) was the single most important competency. The study also revealed that the second most important competency was visibility. Although all the competencies were endorsed to some degree by the respondents, two competencies were perceived to be less important to consider when selecting a principal: change agent, defined as the principal's willingness to actively challenge the status quo, and intellectual stimulation, which means the principal ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture. Additionally, eight competencies emerged from the data: finance, knowledge about special needs, data-driven decision making, loyalty, ethics, triage partnering, professional development, and balance. Respondents also mentioned flexibility, which was one of the 21 competencies and thus not considered an emerging competency. Respondents also provided definitions. From these, data-driven decision making and flexibility were listed more frequently.

**Assessment of competencies during the selection process of effective school principals.** The study also focused on the methods used to actually assess the 21 competencies in principal candidates during the selection process. Findings indicate that most of the principals responding to the survey agreed that the 21 competencies were assessed through an interview with a committee or an interview with the superintendent or designee. Whereas some respondents indicated that the competencies were also assessed in the application or in a presentation at the

interview, a few indicated the competencies were not assessed all. Other assessment methods were used altogether for selecting the principals, according to the respondents, including reference checks, Gallup survey, and experience in the district.

**Differences in the importance of the competencies by campus level (elementary, middle school, high school).** Findings revealed that the greatest proportion of the respondents reported they were serving in an elementary school (39%), with the least number of respondents serving at a high school (27%). A mean was calculated by campus level for each of the competencies and a comparison by campus level made. Minor differences were found in the mean between the three campus levels for all of the 21 competencies. A closer look revealed that whereas all the competencies were endorsed by all campus-level principals as important, elementary and middle school principals perceived communication to be the most important competency; high school principals cited visibility.

Furthermore, with only a minimal difference in the mean between the campus types, the respondents indicated the majority of the 21 competencies to be important to consider when selecting a campus principal. The majority of the competencies were endorsed at a mean of 4.5 or greater on a 5-point scale, with 5 indicating *strongly agree*. This indicates the respondents perceived the importance of most of the competencies in the selection process, regardless of the campus level of the principal. Six competencies had the least noticeable differences in means by campus level: communication; involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; order; flexibility; resources; and knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment.



In contrast, the most noticeable mean difference by the campus levels centered on the perceived importance of the following competencies: relationships, contingent rewards, and input. The high school principals reported a greater importance in possessing the ability to recognize and reward individual accomplishments or contingent rewards than both the elementary or middle school principals.

### **The Relationship of the Study Findings to Previous Research**

Although much has been written about the qualities of effective principals, there has been lack of agreement associated with the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes or competencies required to perform the responsibilities of a school principal. However, previous research reports indicated a variety of competencies that distinguish an effective principal from less effective principal. For example, researchers have submitted that an effective principal must have strong communication skills (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Cotton, 2003; Keller, 1988; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Maxwell, 2007; Rammer, 2007; Schneider & Cairns, 1996). Additionally, in their meta-analysis, Marzano et al. (2005) identified communication to be among the responsibilities of an effective school principal. The present study reaffirms that communication is the most important competency to be considered when selecting an effective school leader. A closer review showed no significant difference in the importance of communication by campus level. This shows that a principal's ability to establish strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students continues to be critical for an effective principal. More importantly, this study suggests that practicing, effective

principals in predominantly Hispanic schools perceive communication to be the most important competency for principals at all campus levels.

Visibility was the second-most important competency to consider in the hiring process, as reported by the principals in the study. This is congruent with previous research indicating that effective principals should be visible in their schools. Heck (1992), Whitaker (2002), and Cotton (2003) reported that being visible in schools is important for principals in order to impact student achievement. Rosenthal (2003) concurred that principals should get out from behind their desks and maintain visibility in their buildings. The visible principal has the opportunity to model his or her beliefs and to promote a positive instructional climate. In reviewing the difference in the importance of visibility by campus level, it was evident that high school principals in the study reported this competency to be more important than communication. Middle school principals perceived visibility as more important than the elementary principals did. However, this does not minimize a principal's ability to have quality interactions with teachers and students. Furthermore, Rammer (2007) reported that superintendents considered visibility to be the second-most important responsibility of an effective school principal.

The study also indicated focus and involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment to be the next two most important competencies to assess when selecting a campus principal. A principal's ability to establish clear goals and keep those goals in the forefront of the school's attention was also found to be important to the success of students by Schneider and Cairns (1996), Keller (1998), Cotton (2003), and

Leithwood and Riehl (2005). In a more recent study, Steiner and Hassel (2011) reported that over the last 40 years two competencies appear critical to high levels of success in most complex leadership jobs: (a) achievement and (b) impact and influence. They defined achievement as the drive and action to set challenging goals and reach a high standard of performance; impact and influence was defined as acting with the purpose of affecting the perceptions, thinking, and actions of others (Steiner & Hassel, 2011). This is similar to the findings of this study, in that the respondents endorsed the importance of assessing the competency focus when hiring a principal. Furthermore, there was little difference in the importance of this competency by school level. Setting clear goals and being focused as a principal is important, regardless of the campus level. This study confirms that this is also an important competency for principals serving in schools with predominantly Hispanic students.

This study also suggests that a principal's ability to directly get involved in the design and implementation of curriculum and instruction assessment practice (involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment) to be one of the most important competencies to consider in the selection process. This supports the results of a study by Glass and Bearman (2003), who surveyed 420 superintendents to investigate the selection criteria they used to hire secondary school principals. Glass and Bearman found that involvement in effective instruction was one of the most important criteria, second only to effective communication skills. Early research also concluded that a principal focused on curriculum and instruction is essential for effective schools (Blasé & Blasé, 1994; Heck, 1992; Leithwood, 1994). Additionally,

Robinson et al. (2008) found planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and curriculum to be essential in for an effective instructional leader. A more recent study also found learning-focused leadership constitutes a major potential influence on learning improvement (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010). This is supported by the perception of the importance of assessing the competency involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment when hiring principals. This was true for all principals of the study, regardless of the school level they were serving, as evident in the minimal mean difference. In essence, effective principals have declared that involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is important, regardless of school level, in schools with a majority-Hispanic student population.

Although all the competencies were endorsed by the respondents to some extent, change agent and intellectual stimulation were rated as the least important to consider when selecting a school principal. In essence, the principal's ability to actively challenge the status quo and the principal's ability to ensure the faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and make the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture were perceived to be not as important. This is in contrast with the latest movement to challenge the status quo and transform public school systems (Bass, 2008; Collins, 2001; Schlechty, 2009) and the importance of creating professional learning communities (Dufour & Eaker, 2008), where professionals within a school engage in conversations that include review of the most current theories and practices for improving student achievement. The

literature indicated one promising strategy for sustained and substantive school improvement is to build professional learning communities (Hord & Summers, 2008; Schmoker, 2005). It is important to note, however, that the relative newness of the transformation movement and professional learning communities might explain why the principals perceived change agent and intellectual stimulation as the least important competencies to consider during the selection process.

In short, although two competencies were perceived to be of less importance, all the competencies were endorsed by the principals in the study. This endorsement is significant in that study participants were practicing effective principals who agreed, and in most cases strongly agreed, in the importance of assessing these competencies when hiring a principal. This confirms Rammer's (2007) study from a superintendent's perspective, which supported the 21 competencies included in the survey. Effective principals serving in schools with majority-Hispanic student populations also endorsed the competencies at all campus levels (elementary, middle, and high school).

Furthermore, this study identified data-driven decision making as the premier emerging competency to consider in the selection of effective principals. This is congruent with the literature indicating strong principal leadership is closely associated with effective data use to enhance student achievement (Copland, 2003; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Wayman, Brewer, & Stringfield, 2009). Wayman and Stringfield (2006) indicated that principal leadership was key to promoting

widespread faculty use of data to monitor student progress, to improve programs, and to increase student achievement.

The results of the study also revealed that two primary methods were used for assessing most of the competencies: interview with a committee and interview with the superintendent or designee. However, other competencies were not assessed at all. In addition, some principals were directly appointed to the position without going through a selection process. The findings of this study confirm those reported by Rammer (2007). His study showed that whereas superintendents endorsed the 21 competencies as very important during the selection of a principal, they did not have a systematic, intentional, or methodical means for assessing the competencies in the principal candidates. Selecting a quality principal to lead America's schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be a complex and demanding process, which could explain the absence of assessment of competencies. In a nationally representative survey, superintendents reported that hiring school principals is highly challenging, in part because a candidate's leadership ability is difficult to gauge (Farkas et al., 2001).

Although an interview with a committee has been a standard method of evaluating applicants and recommending principal candidates for hire (Muhlenbruck, 2001), human resource managers in charge of the selection process for principals do not necessarily consider research as part of their process. Furthermore, national and state standards and assessments are frequently not considered, either (Schlueter & Walker, 2008). Researchers have identified this void in the selection process as a practice that hinders the interview committee's work (Clifford, 2010; Rammer, 2007).

In some cases, the superintendents are not familiar with the standards for principals, the research related to effective school principals, or best practices for assessing the competencies (Clifford, 2010; Rammer, 2007; Simon, 2003). Similarly, Steiner and Hassel (2011) concluded that if effective principals are to be selected to impact student achievement, the hiring process must include the following two steps during the interview with a committee, human resource managers, or the superintendent: (a) Provide a behavior-event interview, where the candidate is asked to describe in detail a specific situation at work he or she addressed successfully, and (b) rate candidates' competency levels, which would require the committee members to code the responses and score them against a predetermined competency model.

## **Conclusions**

Given the nature of the study and the findings, the following four conclusions are advanced.

1. The selection of effective principals requires those in charge of the process to consider the following competencies: affirmation; change agent; contingent rewards; communication; culture; discipline; flexibility; focus; ideals and beliefs; input; intellectual stimulation; involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; monitoring and evaluating; optimizer; order; outreach; relationships; resources; situational awareness; and visibility.
2. Data-driven decision making is also an important emerging competency to consider when selecting principals in Texas–Mexico border schools.

3. Human resource managers and superintendents tend to rely on two types of methods for assessing the principal competencies: an interview with a committee and an interview with a superintendent or designee. Other methods such as reference checks, a Gallup survey, and experience with the district are also promising assessment strategies.
4. The competencies important to consider in the selection of principals differ only slightly among campus levels and are therefore equally important to assess for in the selection process.

### **Implications for Practice and Future Research**

The educational system in the United States serves as a fundamental purpose to educating children to meet the future demands and needs of society. Over the past two decades, educators have experienced changing student demographics, resulting in an increase in Hispanic students (Ennis et al., 2010) accompanied by an increase in accountability mandates. As a result, public school principals have become the focus of student achievement, or lack thereof, across the country. Previous research has confirmed that one of the variables in increasing student achievement is principal leadership (Adamowski et al., 2007; Nettles & Herrington 2007). The principal is responsible for identifying the overall needs of the school, including the learning goals and objectives that ultimately should translate into increased student achievement; thus, the selection of effective principal becomes a priority. Therefore, this study offers several recommendations for those in charge of selecting principals in the Texas–Mexico border serving in schools with a predominantly Hispanic



student population. First, determine which of the competencies, as well as the emerging competency of data-based decision making, are relevant to the principal position being filled. These competencies can become the foundational pieces for human resource managers and superintendents to use in designing a hiring process that includes the assessment of these competencies in principal candidates. Additionally, they must integrate the assessment as part of the interview with the committee or during the interview with the superintendent. A sound assessment process could include some level of triangulation with respect to determining the extent to which a candidate possessed these competencies. Moreover, the interview process could require candidates to respond to written or verbal prompts that assess the competencies. The results of this study are clear: Effective principals endorse the identified competencies when selecting campus principals, so not assessing these is leaving the hiring of principals to chance. Second, human resource managers need to create a professional development plan that directly addresses the gaps in the competencies of the current practicing principals. Third, aspiring principal candidates could benefit from a self-assessment to determine their level of knowledge of each competency identified as important in this study. Based on the results of the self-assessment, aspiring principals may prepare by addressing the lack of competencies prior to becoming a candidate for a principal position along the Texas–Mexico border. Lastly, principal preparation programs in colleges and universities could develop assessment centers by which a determination can be made whether principal candidates possess the competencies endorsed in this study. This information then

could be used to align the curriculum in the program to ensure the development of those competencies.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

In review, the present study was conducted with a select group of principals serving in schools with a predominantly Hispanic student population along the Texas–Mexico border only. Thus, this sample could be expanded to include principals in other areas as well. The demographic information of this study included data on gender of the participants, but no attempts were made to establish differences by gender. Additional studies could be conducted with a focus on principal gender to determine the similarities or differences or with a focus on the size of the campus the respondent is currently serving to determine whether the importance of the competencies differ based on student enrollment. Other studies might expand the participant sample by including assistant principals and lead teachers serving in high-performing schools to better triangulate the findings.

Second, not all eligible participants responded to the electronic survey. A possible threat of the electronic survey was blocked by filtering systems at the campus of some eligible principals. This resulted in a 64% participation rate. This study could be expanded to include face-to-face interviews with select principals or a case study of a district including a set number of high-performing campuses.

Furthermore, this study only employed a deductive approach to identifying the competencies important to consider in the selection of an effective principal.

Consequently, other studies could employ an inductive approach to identifying the emerging critical competencies given the current accountability context.

This study provided a predetermined list of methods that might be used to assess the competencies endorsed by the participants. Future studies might ask the participants to list the methods actually used to assess the competencies when they were selected in order to determine similarities and differences based on demographic data of the participants (i.e., gender, ethnicity, student enrollment, campus level).

Lastly, the participants of this study were effective school principals only serving in high-performing schools. Future studies could expand the sample size to include principals serving in low-performing schools to compare the similarities and differences in the endorsement of the competencies important to consider when selecting a principal. Moreover, the study could also employ a mixed-method approach to include face-to-face interviews.

Finally, the U.S. educational system exists to ensure the future demand and needs of society are attainable based on the values and tenets expressed in founding documents such as the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the United States of America. Equity and excellence in education for all students demand an effective school principal for each and every campus. When the assessment of competencies associated with effective school principals becomes an integral part of the selection process in all districts across the country, academic achievement should expand exponentially for all children.

## **Appendix A: Survey**

### **Selecting a K-12 Building Principal**

This survey is intended to gather information on the competencies used in the selection and hiring of K–12 building principals. This survey consists of two parts. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

#### **Part I:**

Select one choice for each question:

1. My gender is:
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
2. My ethnicity/race is:
  - ☐ White
  - ☐ Hispanic
  - ☐ African American
  - ☐ Asian
  - ☐ Other
3. I have been a principal for:
  - ☐ 1-3years
  - ☐ 4-7 years
  - ☐ 8-10years
  - ☐ 10-15years
  - ☐ 15+ years
4. I am currently a(n):
  - ☐ Elementary principal
  - ☐ Middle/Jr. High School Principal
  - ☐ High School Principal
  - ☐ K-12 Principal
5. I was the principal at this school during the 2009-2010 school year.
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
6. The student enrollment at my current school is:
  - ☐ 0-250
  - ☐ 251-500
  - ☐ 501-1000
  - ☐ 1001-1500
  - ☐ 1501+

7. The student population during the 2009-2010 school year at my campus consisted of:
- ☐ Less than 10 percent Hispanics
  - ☐ Between 10 and 50 percent Hispanics
  - ☐ Between 51 and 90 percent Hispanics
  - ☐ 91 percent or more Hispanics
8. All my experience as a principal has been in this district only:
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

Part II:

For each item below, please check the box that best reflects your consideration of the listed competency.

**For those competencies you mark, \*Strongly Agree or \*Agree, please select all the choices that describe how the competency was assessed when you were selected as a principal.**

**When selecting/hiring a building principal, I consider this competency to be important:**

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	Change agent	Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/ committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/ superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	Contingent rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4	Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and sense of community and cooperation					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6	Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	Flexibility	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8	Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9	Ideals/Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							



	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10	Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	Intellectual stimulation	Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12	Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13	Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14	Monitoring/Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15	Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16	Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17	Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18	Relationships	Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19	Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20	Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Competency	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21	Visibility	Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students					
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Other Competency (List)	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
22							
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other _____</li> </ul>							

	Other Competency (List)	Definition	*Strongly agree	*Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
23							
<p>*How was this competency assessed when you were selected as principal? Mark all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Application</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Presentation at interview</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/committee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Interview w/superintendent or designee</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not assessed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Other_____</li> </ul>							

## Appendix B: Letter to Principals

November 2, 2011

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral student at The University of Texas, Austin, and am conducting research on the selection of K–12 public school principals. The selection and hiring of principals is critical in student achievement and I am certain your district is devoted to hiring the very best principals. You have been selected to participate in this study as a result of the outstanding performance of your students. **Your campus has been designated as one of the *highest performing campuses* by the Center of Research, Evaluation and Advancement of Teacher Education (CREATE) for the 2009-2010 school year.** For this reason, your input as an effective school leader is *extremely* valuable.

This survey is intended to obtain from an effective school principal's perceptions the competencies that should be considered in the selection process and how these competencies may have been assessed when you were hired. The results of the survey will be reported and published anonymously in aggregate form and no specific district or principal will be identified.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact me at [phone number] or by e-mail at [e-mail address].

Use the following web-link to provide consent and complete the short 20-minute survey: <http://zoomerang.com>

Thank you in advance for your participation and providing valuable input.

With deep appreciation,

Arturo Cavazos  
Doctoral Student  
Member of the Cooperative Superintendency Program  
University of Texas at Austin

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